



The cover is by the enigmatic JTRON.

YOUR BEST OF THE 1980s WWF TOP TWENTY RESULTS/RECAPS/STATS

[THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYERS]

Thank you to Chris Harrington for compiling the ballots. We have some of his statistics down yonder but click here for the TRUE WRESTLESTAT DORK-OUT-!

#1: Sgt.Slaughter vs Iron Sheik- WWF- Boot Camp Match-6/16/84-MSG

PAS: Amazing match, which justifiably got the #1 spot. The pre-match has really great pageantry with Prvt. Terry Daniels coming out in dress blues, presenting the colors. While Sheik comes in with Ayatollah Blassie waving the Iranian flag. Slaughter sprints to the ring and totally beats on the Sheik for the first five minutes or so, hitting him in the face with the whip, headbutting him with the helmet. Sheik is totally dominated early and only takes over when he reversals Slaughter into the turnbuckle and Slaughter takes his giant bump to the floor. Large parts of the middle of the match are built around Sheik using his loaded boot, they do a lot of teases with the boot, transitions around the using the boot. There is a point where Slaughter loads his own boot and hits a diving stomp which splits the top of the Sheik's head open where he just sprays blood. The finish is really great as Sheik hits two nice suplexes but can't put Slaughter out. Sheik unties the boot and smacks against the turnbuckle to load it, but Sarge hits a huge lariat. They then both crawl for the boot with Slaughter getting it first and smashing the Sheik with it for the pin. Just an awesome, brutal, perfectly paced war.

TKG: So the premise of this match is that you can only win by pinfall. Its an odd counterintuitive premise, Slaughter of course has cobra clutch as a finisher while Sheik has camel clutch, and

we think of submissions as being more decisive these days and submission matches being blow off matches. But FUCK the premise works really really well as submissions would've kind of slowed down this brawl and the ref on the outside of ring who can only enter ring to count falls means every near fall takes a long time. The ref needs the time to get into ring so every three count feels like a ten count...to pin someone you need to knock them out. Slaughter is a guy who at times I've found to be such a over the top bumper that his bumps feel like comedy spots...here there was none of that as his first big bump was suitably nasty...while Iron Sheik turns out to be a closet Jerry Estrada fan and takes a bunch of big bumps including a over the top corner of table and knee of ring announcer bump. Phil talks about the pacing of this. I've watched 8 DVD's of high end 80's WWF and well there is a type of WWF pacing that just leaves me constantly disappointed "ooh this would be a great point for Don Muraco to get in some offense but this is WWF so this is where the match ends instead". You know exactly when the finisher section is and it often feels tacked on. With Slaughter and Sheik fighting for knockouts...everything felt like the match could end right there and just paced in a way that left me emotionally happy.

The match is filled with just awesome awesome exchanges, and really great execution (alot of the 80s matches may give you one of those or the other or both from one participant but not his opponent) but this gives you it all:

At one point Sheik stretches his leg out so his boot is on top turnbuckle and tries to ram Slaughter's head into the point of the boot. Slaughter grabs the point of boot to prevent it. Sheik tries a second time. Slaughter blocks a second time. Sheik pushes third time harder so Slaughter's head crashes into the post and he eats the pointed boot to his belly.

During the brawl on the floor Sheik lifts a padded chair for a chairshot and he lifts it like he's performing a clean and jerk holding it above his head in a way that makes it look like he's lifting a really heavy chair and then he just throws it in a really reckless looking manner. Slowed down it's a pretty safe chairshot as Slaughter is hit with cushion but Sheik makes it look nastier than your average dangerous un-protected chairshot.

RM: This was about as pure a brawl as you could ask for, and the most logical extension of the previous MSG match (which clocked in at #11), where there is no shutdown because of stupid rules and more developed boot angling. If those who were behind making all the stupid WWE products were visionaries (and perhaps real wrestling fans) as opposed to reactionaries cashing in on whatever's hot, I think they could make a ton of money just off of a DVD collection of Sgt. Slaughter at MSG. Before this project, I knew the Pat Patterson/Slaughter streetfight as a reference point for what Slaughter could achieve in a senseless grudge brawl, but this match is far more engaging, and both my new school bloodlust and old school desire for appropriate comeuppances are satisfied healthily here. It got me adrenalinized twenty years removed and in the sterile familiar confines of my cluttered living room, so I imagine Sheik getting beat with his own loaded boot must have put live marks in attendance into an emotional frenzy. That's pure wrestling.

RN: This was it.

Had everything. Drama, build, intrigue, the right gimmick at the right time..., lots of hate...100% of the fans behind one person...Juice...teasing of the big finish...a dramatic fight to retrieve a weapon...Sheik having the absolute best match of his life....and Sarge riding the wave of jingoism at the height of a decade where the "Red Menace" and "Evil Arabs" were seen as "Da Debil".

Not to mention when the Sarge jumped off the top rope and split the Sheik's head open with a boot to the head....I audibly cheered with the television crowd.

This match to me just is pure emotion and manipulating the people into losing themselves and committing to totally react to a match the way it was meant to be.

I'll bet alot of the matches in the different territories similar to this will finish in my respective BEST OF THE 80's Wrasslin top five matches.....as the same elements were present in World Class' Freebirds vs. Von Erich's Badstreet Six Man tag...the NWA TA vs. Blanchard I QUIT match....MidSouthern's/CWA/Memphis' Lawler vs. Idol (gets points for changing up the epic GOOD GUY wins finish) and other fantastic matches of the eighties.

Like I said, everyone is right on with this being Number One, imo. At this point after seeing how perfectly this came together for one night.....I think this may have been the best and most dramatic match of ALL the eighties. Should spark interesting debate as this stuff continues. I can only imagine the feeling of those in attendance live at MSG for this match.

OH, and I liked Sarge punching Sheik in the throat. Sheik really bumped like a madman at all the right times here. A great, great match.

DR: I really fucking loved this match when I first saw it. This came right off rediscovering Slaughter from a smart perspective- as opposed to the original rube experience- in the Road To Greensboro stuff that came out not too long ago. Slaughter was fucking awesome. Then I saw the Valentine-Garvin match and then I realized what I truly love in wrestling and it slanted my perception of the rest of the matches. Garvin and Valentine take me back to Johnny Valentine beating the living fuck out of people and taking a massive assbeating. It also propelled me to what I later discovered in Puroresu (the Valentine ethic). Fuck, I'll take the Slaughter- Backlund match over this one- just because Slaughter could do more than just bump gigantic and bleed- he could also beat the living shit out of Bob Backlund and force them to have "fun" match as opposed to boring assed "Backlund" match. But yeah. I would have had this at number one if Valentine-Garvin wasn't such a fucking wake-up call amidst the three hundred shitty British Bulldog-Hart Foundation- Rockers- Brainbusters- Rougeaus tag-by-numbers half-assed ode to the Southern Rockers. But it did, so it did and it did. Sorry.

#2: Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat (3/29/87 Pontiac, MI WM3)- [RAVEN MACK]: This is a much ballyhooed match in wrestling's recent history, and it definitely lives up to most of it. Everybody's seen this match most likely, so there's no need for me to recap the highlights and

plot turns, but I really dug the high intensity pacing of the match, emphasizing not only the importance the event but that this was a culmination of something larger meaning that both were going it a little extra, giving it Super Bowl-like qualities almost. There's a lot about this match that became standard "great match" style since then - the whole 2.9 count series of near pinfalls type stuff - but here it still maintains relevance as there's a big title match and a lot of grudgeholding behind every kick out. It was the rare occurrence of a big match between two top workers on a major stage (93 fuckin' thousand people!) and both workers were 100% dialed-in. Of course, leave it to the WWF to think 93,000 people wouldn't be happy with one of the best matches they'd all probably ever seen live, so it had to have George Steele/Elizabeth ringside (although they kept it to a minimum, thankfully), and the ending had to the heel champ hit his finisher while the ref was bumped out, and then fuckin' George Steele pushes Savage off the top rope for Steamboat to get the pin. But even a convoluted ending that made the heel loser seem stronger than the crowd favorite winner couldn't take away from what this match did have.

#3: Adrian Adonis/Dick Murdoch vs. Brisco Brothers (12/28/84 MSG)-[RAVEN MACK]: Holy fuck, what a match. I always assume the Brisco Brothers were too boring for my tastes, what with them never using fireballs or being managed by Gary Hart or Oliver Humperdink. Remembering back on growing up though, two of my strongest memories of Mid Atlantic TV was the Roddy Piper vs. Jack Brisco match that seemed to go the whole hour where Piper used a roll of quarters on Brisco, and the scientific match between Ricky Steamboat & Jay Youngblood against the Briscos which of course led to a slow nefarious brief heel run by them boys from Oklahoma.

Dick Murdoch is the purest redneck worker there ever was, because much like your average hard-working premier employee Jimmy Joe 12-Pack at the local steamfitting shop or small engine repair garage or woodmill, Murdoch and Jimmy Joe, in what seems to be a redneck trait, will blow off the boring steam of doing the same thing forever and a day due to a deeply-ingrained work ethic with subtle comedic moments that break up the monotony, yet somehow don't disrupt the more serious business at hand. Murdoch's weird selling is the epitome of this.

This is also a very traditional old school face/heel match as the faces are technically efficient machines, sticking to a limb with a pair of one-track minds, whereas the heels are proficient enough but seem more keen in peppering foreheads with some sawdust floor barroom barrages, one or two while holding an empty bottle as makeshift brass knucks. And every move seems real - the most unrealistic thing I saw was Murdoch brainbusting Jerry, and Brisco did some nice spasmodic twitching to make it seem real enough. (Yes, I still believe in the sleeperhold, as most people who've ever had their carotid sinus closed within the carotid artery by an overzealous uncle's squeezing arms would.) Just a full-on wrestling fight with no stupid shit to ruin it. Even the time limit tease ending didn't bother me at all.

It would make me a happy man to see full-grown men over 230 lbs. (and without the aid of chemistry to achieve that size or whatever shape they may attain with that weight) recreate this style. Seems like it's all 165 lb.ers trying to do the realistic styles now, and anybody who gets big

is either ridiculously roided or comedically fat. Where are the thick-assed Murdoch's and Adonis's at who can tear shit up and lift a car's stuck side out of a muddy ditch when necessary? Where are the real-looking Briscos, not cut but not flabby at all, and don't shave the hair off their fuckin' chest to be a wrestler? If promoters had the foresight and workers had the ability to put aside egos and they all decided to have tag teams exist for longer than the traditional nine month incubation of partner vs. partner feud, and we had actual tag team wrestling again, I would hope motherfuckers would worship this match.

#4: Bret Hart vs Randy Savage (Seattle WA 11/11/87 aired SNME 11/28/87)- [ROB NAYLOR]: I'm a huge fan of this match. Definitely placed very high on my ballot (I had it at #11, actually). Hart is one of my favorites from the mid-eighties wwf heels...in that he was great at targeting a spot on a good guy and just hammering away with punches, kicks and any other simple offense to take out the bodypart. Nothing flashy in the mid-eighties with Bret. Just black tights and black straps. Not overly charismatic, but just a tough dude who had great focus.

Savage, to me, was always a world class seller. He'd do that limping, jumping and crumble motion that looked so damn desperate. This match had a great production aspect to it...as we got zooms of Savage clutching the virtually useless leg, his pained expression, Jimmy Hart jumping around like a maniac, Bret just stoically doing his job, etc...

Savage just sold...and sold...and sold. And this match NOT having the tired 80's SUPERMAN POWERS no sell and large comeback by the good guy really put it into the upper echelon for me.

Every bit as simplistic as the Sheik vs. Sarge stuff, just without the great amount of hate. But I loved what these guys did and I also dug the hell out of the finish and how Savage really just took a beating and made Bret seem like a guy on his level, which at this stage, Bret was simply a tag wrestler with "Great execution". But this match did a great job elevating the Hitman.

#5: Bret Hart vs Mr Perfect (10/2/89 Wheeling WV)- [ROB NAYLOR]: I'm a big Curt Hennig fan. I love the idea of a heel taking a big flip bump backwards after getting their head bounced off a turnbuckle pad and scurrying. To me, it doesn't look fake, it looks "more animated". I love the sense of flare and athleticism that Hennig brought to his matches. It coincided greatly with his rather mundane offensive repertoire. Aside from the rolling necksnap, Hennig kept his offense to a basic minimum.

These two, imo, had a fantastic match here. Very smooth wrestling and while I agree that lots of folks don't particularly care for simply smooth wrestling and counterwrestling and lack of hate, I have no problem just watching two wrestlers who are technically proficient just going out to show their stuff. I actually remember as a kid purchasing tickets to Hershey Arena WWF shows for Hennig vs. Bret and Hennig vs. Bulldog matches. It was always the best stuff on any 80's WWF show.

Poffo at ringside during this was a riot. That dude deserved a way better role, imo. Henning cheating to get the win here after giving Bret a ton of offense was great. It's late 80's WWF, they really had NO OTHER finishes than heel cheats to win, so I can't complain about the finish not being what I wanted.

Another aspect of the Hennig vs. Bret matches that I loved was them constantly doing all the Hennig vs. Bockwinkle hiptoss/kickup/headlock takeover stuff...but in this case, with Hennig being Bockwinkle and Bret playing the underdog.

Very good stuff.

#6: Bob Backlund vs Adrian Adonis (1/18/82 MSG)- [DEAN RASMUSSEN]: There are three of these matches, and as with the other Backlund matches that run in series, my love varies deeply from match to match- ranging from sheer ecstasy to utter contempt and boredom. I don't remember if I loved this when I first watched it- as I'm pretty sure I like the third Backlund/Adonis match the best- but the reading public has spoken and I am its humble servant. Schneider was going on about how weirdly this is paced but I notice that all the Backlund matches are so very very pre-Hogan/Road Warriors power wrestling, a near anachronism- so it is a bit much to adjust to. Though being a thousand years old, I remember when this would be considered a highspot bonanza. Adonis works the arm early and they trade holds out of it for a while- with the crowd following intently as they hit stalemate after stalemate, with Adonis getting the heel heat for being so surprised and engorged with power for having hung with Backlund hold for hold. The whole first section is basically a mirror section until Backlund starts working an armbar and the endless variations therein- with Adonis truly bringing the greatness by selling and struggling out of the basic armbar for ten minutes in a way that would have otherwise put me to sleep in other Backlund matches in the set. Adonis finally cheats his way out of the endless shoulder torture and they have a fast section running the ropes to get you all revved up until the body slam by Backlund once again signals eight more minutes of Backlund working the shoulder. Backlund does a goofy spot where he pumps Adonis arm while the crowd counts along and Adonis saves the match for me by spinning out and choking Backlund for annoying me. Adonis then goes shoulder first through the ropes into the post and suddenly Backlund working on the arm has new pertinence and meaning. Backlund doesn't sink into the armbar and go for the kill like the bump would seem dictate but Adonis flies into the ropes and they smack together and Adonis is truly keeping me awake he hits a nice dropkick and slowly goes on offense- which is all high impact and fun with the suplexes and powerslams. and then he stomps on Backlund's junk and I'm in love with this match. And he hits a fucking AWESOME elbow drop and I truly love Adrian Adonis. And he hits a skullcrushing but unsold) piledriver TO SET BACKLUND GOING ON OFFENSE? WWF isn't Memphis (obviously). Backlund hits his own piledriver and Adonis kinda sells it before going all Ray Stevens into the turnbuckles. Which of course leads to Adonis getting the sleeperhold procurement. Who thought All Japan invented hilarious selling? Backlund leans into being posted and Backlund will bleed like a freak. He pusses out on the next posting shots and I'm not feeling the love- though he does blow plasma all over the arena like he did make the postings look good. Adonis is great feeling the moment and beating the fuck out of Backlund- punching, taunting and dropping the elbow. Adonis is

awesome delivering the beating and Backlund wakes me from my ennui by punching to Comeback and reason I like Backlund matches finally kicks. Backlund is infuriatingly boring for the first 3/4ths of his matches, but he always knows how to make the last 1/4th worth the first 3/4s. Here, he fights like a motherfucker and Adonis fights back like a motherfucker and then it's over. I actually thought this was the third best of the 3 Backlund/Adonis matches but it has it's moments and I will not second guess you, my dear reader.

#7: Greg Valentine vs Ron Garvin (9/30/89 MSG)- [DEAN RASMUSSEN]: I know exactly where this match is on disc 5. If you didn't like this match, do me a big favor and go fuck yourself. Okay. Okay, I'm sorry; don't go fuck yourself. Just don't sit next to me at a wrestling match. Alright. Nothing personal. Really. It's just that me and you have nothing in common- wrestlingwise. Schneider said the key to this is that it's a Flair-Garvin match with Valentine replace the big bumps with ASTOUNDING fuckin STIFFNESS. And that's about the beginning and end of it. I love this match the most because I remember Valentine talking about the Tito Santana fued on the Hall of fame disc from last year and he was talking about how he made an agreement that he was gonna lay it in on Tito because his stuff doesn't really work unless he lays it in- and he respected Santana because Santana didn't think twice about working Valentine's style. And see, I assume Garvin had that same conversation with every guy he wrestled for the first time. And I can see Valentine and Garvin- first time they talked about the match- saying at the same time, "So I really need to lay it in..." and then laughing and putting some pee in B Brian Blair's fruit smoothie or something. This match is soooo heads and shoulders above everything else on the 8 disc set. This was what BattlARTS aspired to. This is what pro wrestling aspires to.

#8: Glamour Girls vs Jumping Bomb Angels (11/24/87 MSG)- [ROB NAYLOR]: I vividly remember watching these matches as a kid. Totally mind-blowing stuff for WWF tv at the time. Seeing the Japanese women doing nip ups after double top rope dropkicks and hard kicks and just taking a beating from the frumpier looking Kai and Martin was always a blast.

They (the Angels) were so likable. The fans not only got big-time behind the Angels for their never before seen style and the moves, but also cause they were the perfect cute counterpart for the ugly Glamour Girls and their prick manager Jimmy Hart.

I believe that this series of TV matches debuted the first powerbomb that I'd ever seen in my life. That always stood out to me. Maybe I saw Bamm Bamm Gordy do one in Texas a year earlier, but damned if I remembered it by the time these matches aired on USA.

I'll say this, looking back at this match, Martin and Leilani were SOOOO underrated. In fact, I'd even say that Judy Martin was very much like a female Terry Gordy. Tough, threw decent looking kicks, pulled hair and threw great punches to the face and busted out some great high impact moves like a piledriver.

This was a great match again, had long heat and by the time they Angels got their hottag, it was on and the fans went ballistic. I'm surprised this series of matches doesn't get waaay more talk,

as to me, it was like Sayama vs. DK, in that it was progressive and showing a new audience a whole different style of wrestling at a time where a lot of the wrestling on USA tv looked the same, but with different characters.

#9: Ricky Steamboat vs Jake Roberts (8/9/86 Boston, MA)- [PHIL SCHNEIDER]: This really was an amazing match, really paced differently then everything else on this set. This was the Jake Roberts show, as this was the best in ring "evil genius" performance I have ever seen. The opening five minutes was all about Jake dodging and blocking all of Steamboat's chops. Each time he blocked a shot, he would get this shit eating grin on his face, he even pointed to his chin, daring Steamboat to hit him. He would also go on offense with little sneak shots. After all that teasing, when he finally hits a chop combo the crowd goes nuts. After all the buildup, when Steamboat gets on offense he gets reckless and the frustrated Steamboat makes another mistake though and chops the steel pole.

Roberts pounces then and just rips Steamer's arm. Really Fuchish, including jamming into the space between the ringpost and stabilizing bar, and lots of wrist and finger manipulation. At one point he just steps on his wrist and grinds it out. Steamboat is a master of selling, and doesn't use the left arm for the rest of the match.

However like any James Bond villain Roberts goes to far, and allows Ricky to come back. First he gets caught unwrapping his wrist tape, which allows Steamboat to Tully him on the top rope. Then at the end he bumps the ref, which costs him the pinfall, and allows Steamboat to roll him up.

Roberts did pretty much nothing particularly athletically impressive, but was just brilliant here. You watch this and you can see why people keep giving him jobs no matter how much crack he smokes.

#10: Sgt. Slaughter vs. Iron Sheik (5/21/84 MSG)-[RAVEN MACK]:The whole series of matches from this time between Sheik and Slaughter were so filled with crowd heat, and Slaughter and Sheik channeled that into such great violence, which created this self-perpetuating cycle like any great feud is supposed to do. Sheik is a perfect sneaky heel, as well as a begging coward, and Sarge has better intelligence than the Bush administration could ever hope for, to not only figure out the loaded boot deal but to acquire it for himself stealthily for the perfect comeuppance upside the Iron Sheik's evil little terrorist head, to give him a few new pockmarks to take back home with him.

Of course, American arrogance comes through again, subtly, as Sarge refuses to pin the Sheik his first few covers, pulling him at one for more abuse. As an American powerhouse, he wants to not only defeat the Third World menace with a foreign psychology, but he wants to punish him, to teach him a lesson, even if the language he uses may not be understood by his enemy. So Sheik gets control for a while, because he comes from a resilient people who you can beat and drag around for years and decades, and they will continue to fight, against any odds. And they don't play by our accepted rules of what's right and wrong, as exemplified by

The Iron Sheik using announcers' tables and padded chairs to bludgeon the almighty Slaughter. Then the dreaded pointy boot, which allows Slaughter to do what he does best - blade a fuckin' gusher off his forehead and wobble around clutching at the ropes trying to get it together to lay some potatoes to his enemy. Sheik is from an educated yet animalistic people, which is why he can so smoothly transition from biting the bloody cranium of Slaughter, to using a release suplex to drop him onto a crimson stain in the mat. But this is America baby, so Slaughter is back after being down, and he goes after the Sheik's boot to prove what he's long accused the Iron Sheik of secretly doing with his hidden weapon, but the ref DQs them both for being out of control and others rush in to keep Slaughter from proving to the World what he feels he knows to be true. And the Sheik scurries off with his secrets intact.

The professional wrestling, in it's most perfect form, uses the reality of the outside world, whether it be political or pop cultural or whatever, and pollinates that with the well-coordinated work of better-than-average wrestlers like Slaughter and the Sheik, to make some in-ring violence that's more than real enough to have a cathartic effect for you on whatever in the real world it was referencing.

I don't think I'd feel as good though, if Slaughter was taking on The Iron Sheik and Skandor Akbar in a handicap match, and contemplating inviting Sabu to join up the opposing team. But Slaughter wouldn't be stupid enough to do something like that. Maybe it's a sign I'm just getting old, but it seems both the reality of the outside world and the professional wrestling have become far shittier and less satisfying in the last decade or so.

#11: Ultimate Warrior vs Rick Rude (8/28/89 East Rutherford NJ Summerslam)- [TOM K]: Apparently, the 1989 Summerslam is the secret WWF workrate PPV. As two of the matches on the top twenty are from that. Honestly outside of Brisco Bros. vs. North/South Connection, I don't think any WWF tag match made my top 50. But the second Summerslam match on this set ended up as my number three match (behind Boot Camp match, and Garvin v Valentine).

You watch this entire set of DVDs and you get used to a lot of the WWF formulas and a lot of the problems that WWF matches have. The weird thing about Rude vs. Warrior is as you watch it, you keep anticipating "Oh this is the spot where they ruin this...oh here it comes" and they never do. They never fuck it up. The match has the potential to fail. I mean that potential shows up again and again and again and they avoid it each and every time. It's shocking. Doubly shocking because it's a match with Ultimate Warrior.

I'm used to Rude in WCW so it takes a bit to adjust to him in WWF. Rude in WWF had a shaved chest and Gallagher's hair. The standard story on Rude is that he was a guy who was all charisma, shtick and bumps until he got to WCW. The story is wrong. Rock n Roll Express vs. Fernandez and Rude absolutely smokes British Bulldogs vs. Dream Team from this set (some of that is due to... well... WWF wrestling sucking, but yeah). Of the three Rude matches on this set all of them easily made my top 30. One of them was against Piper and one was against Warrior. And well the story on Ultimate Warrior is that he stinks. That story is probably true, although Piper looked like more of a broomstick in his match.

The opening section of this match is all about Ultimate Warrior manhandling Rude: no selling Rude's offense and Rude bumping like an absolute freak. Well the other kind of story of the opening section is: "HOLY SHIT, Ultimate Warrior has a lot of offense". I didn't remember him having this many moves.

Warrior races out to ring, Rude shucking out of Warrior's attempts to lock up and nails Warrior with a Ringo Mendoza/Larry Zbyszko/ Sano style kick. Warrior no sells it and does his raise the roof dance. Everything Rude does is no sold. Warrior gorilla press slams Rude to the floor, rams Rude into apron into floor, into the belt. Then Warrior vertical suplexes Rude on the floor and follows up with a fistdrop, drags Rude back into the ring and throws him back out to take another big bump to the floor. Warrior then bodyslams Rude on the floor, throws Rude back into ring and then goes to the top rope. WAIT WAIT. He's already thrown a suplex. Ultimate Warrior has a suplex and a top rope move?? And it's Warrior with the double axe handle. Yeah, apparently he has a top rope move.

You have a bunch of pin attempts here with Warrior going for the pin Rude kicking out and Warrior hitting another big move (body slam, another suplex, a running atomic drop that has almost a Matt Hughes running slam feel to it) and going for the pin again. Rude starts the Rude sell back story during all this. Rude does his signature back sell where he kind of splays his legs and squeezes and walks like someone stuck a soup spoon up his ass. That's Rude's signature sell but should also be pointed out that most of Warrior's offense is back working offense. At one point Warrior just picks Rude up by sides and drops him forcibly on his spine. It's a painful looking bump that Rude milks well.

Warrior eventually goes back up to the top rope. He has a second top rope move? And Rude desperately sprints across ring to knock Warrior down and crotch him. Lessons to be learned by watching the WWF in the 80s: good guys are always stronger than bad guys but can still be hurt if you hit them in their sack.

Warrior isn't the best guy at selling as he sells a low blow by doing a lot of headbanging and starting to do deep breathing Lamaze exercises. You have a Rude section of offense where all of Warrior's selling is built around hard huffing breathing. Is he legit blown up? I mean he's thrown suplexes and done top rope moves, it's Warrior. Is he selling? Who the fuck knows? But next section is Rude wearing down Warrior who is either selling that he's getting wind taken out of him or has no wind. Rude hits him with a pretty snapping vertical suplex, nice kidney shots, and camel clutch. They do a bunch of simple camel clutch spots with Rude jumping on Warrior's back as Warrior keeps on trying to power up. All this is really easy crowd popping control stuff with some 2 counts as they build toward Rude Awakening.

Rude twists toward Rude Awakening and well you expect Rude to hit move and Warrior to pop up and it all to be over. Instead Warrior COUNTERS. Warrior gets hands between Rude's and gets self out of hold. Warrior goes for the clothesline and well I've watched 100 matches from the 80s, that was nice touch protecting Rude's finisher but now it ends. Rude avoids the

clothesline and gets on Warriors back for sleeper. Hey, a WWF heel cut off a WWF face on offense. Warrior struggles in sleeper and instead of powering out drops down to counter into chinbreaker. Warrior doesn't power out of stuff. Instead we have Warrior with two wrestling counters. WTF??

We do get the double noggin knocker spot that allows everyone to sell for awhile before they can get to their feet. And the heel gets to his feet first?? Warrior at this point powers up (which is appropriate after double noggin knocker spot which should weaken both guys) while Rude tries to keep him down with forearms and Mongolian chops. Warrior powers to feet gets of a backdrop that leads to a Warrior run of offense. At first this is what you'd expect out of a Warrior run of offense, a series of clotheslines powerslam and a running powerslam. But this is the match where Warrior is gonna whip out all his offense whether he actually knows how to do the moves or not and so you get a Warrior piledriver that I can't imagine any sane wrestler agreeing to eat. And then you get the weirdest thing to find in a WWF match. The face gets a visual fall. I mean anywhere else that wouldn't be a big deal. But this is the WWF in the 80s where the heel normally gets the visual fall..."damnit if it wasn't for the ref being knocked out the heel could've won it. It's a travesty. "?? Face getting visual fall makes more sense to me. And well the crowd response to it is a lot better than the crowd response to heel visual fall.

Warrior at this point has all this momentum behind him and decides to go for his big splash. Hey I do remember him having the big splash. That doesn't surprise me. Warrior gets nice height but Rude selling desperation raises knees. Both sell fatigue and Rude goes and fucking Ganso Bombs Warrior. WHAT???! 2.9 And we get a Rude run of bigger offense fist drop, top rope fist drop, piledriver etc.

Rude at this point is distracted by Piper who's come out to jaw. The two taunt each other for awhile allowing Warrior enough time to properly sell the beating he just took and recover. Rude goes to second rope to yell at Piper some more. Warrior by now is recovered and German's Rude off the second rope. OK this is the first bit of Warrior offense that actively looks bad in this match. I mean everything he did till this point has looked ok, Rude even made his lariats look like lariats. German not so pretty. Warrior then goes for flying shoulder tackle, splashes Rude across Rude's back, and rolls him up for three.

I really like this match a ton. Rude makes all of Warriors stuff look good and Rude's offense is such that Warrior whether deliberately or not ends up selling it. The transitions back and forward make a lot of sense, and keep the crowd excited and into the flow of the match. Neither guy leaves the match looking weak and it's a big WWF match with a good finish. That almost never happens.

You watch a lot of these 80s tapes and you learn to hate WWF match finishes. You really get to watch the evolution toward the run in belt shot. Heel cheats with foreign object and either ref sees it and immediately disqualifies or heel hits it and wins. Most places powder lead heel to transition to offense. In the WWF face dominates match and powder is finish. You don't hit face with belt in the middle of match to cut him off. Belt shot is finish. Sometimes belt shot is

elaborate: Randy Savage hits himself with bell. But still it is the finish. None of the wrestling can beat Savage he can only be put away by accident with his own foreign object. I'm still not clear how that finish is any better than Wild Samoan matches where the heels only were hurt and lost when heels accidentally hit themselves. But that's the way WWF does things. There also of course is the WWF finish where heel's offense is just no sold and face wins.

I really like the Piper distraction finish as it isn't any of those things. It isn't Piper jaws and there is a roll up. Warrior gets a short run of offense after Piper comes out. Piper as foreign object isn't the finish, he's the transition to face offense. Warrior doesn't no sell, because of Piper, Warrior has the time to recover.

#12- Hart Foundation v. Brainbusters (8/28/89 East Rutherford NJ Summerslam)-[PHIL SCHNEIDER]:

This was from Summerslam 89, and was kind of an NWA v. WWF dream match at the time. As one might expect from an NWA dream team, the Busters were booked incredibly weak in this match. Harts dominate the first 10 minutes of this match, just bumping around both Tully and Arn. Of course you don't get two more fun bumping, stooging heels in the history of wrestling then Tully and Arn.

Still you never get the moment when Arn and Tully turn the switch and go into killer mode, even when they finally get the advantage on Anvil, they don't really get any big offense. This is a Tully and Arn match with no gordbuster, slingshot suplex, spinebuster or DDT. Mostly just double teams and cutting off the Anvil. Neidhart is alot of fun in this, he has alot of neat face strongman spots, no-selling Tully's forearms, throwing Arn across the ring after a pin, lifting Tully on his back from a chinlock. Bret wasn't in this a ton, but he had clearly gotten pretty great by 1989, there is a section where he and Tully exchange overhand wristlock counters which is just awe inspiring. Busters do get the pin after a distracted ref, but Harts take 80% of this. Still it is Tully and Arn, they were booked really weak their entire WWF run, but they are both such awesome wrestlers that it is a pleasure to watch them getting buried. Probably 50 better Tully and Arn matches in NWA, however subpar Tully and Arn is still one of the best WWF matches of the decade.

TKG: YIKES!! Probably 50 better Arn and Tully matches in the NWA? Probably hundreds. When did Phil get so jejune. Reads like it was written by a character on Even Stevens. I used to abuse pills. My world has still never been that sunny.

So it's another WWF tag. Before the page got hacked I had started to write a TOMK RANKS THE WWF TAG MATCHES thing. Where I was gonna explain where I ranked all the 25 tag matches on this thing vis a vis each other. It seemed like the kind of pointless nerdy project that I excel at. I mean no one watches WWF for tag team matches. Yeah there was that time Antonio Rocca and Miguel Perrez Jr were tagging. But that was an anomaly. Crocket had a show mained by a tag inspire him to do Supershows, and those NWA year in review shows were all about tag feuds and showcase tag matches. But WWF never had a "Final Conflict" and tags are sideshow matches. And well you read Phil's review and it comes off like Arn and Tully were

treated like jobbers because they were ex-NWA guys. But that's part of it, but the other thing is most WWF tag matches in the 80s are built around the face getting 80% of the offence. On this DVD set Orton/Piper vs. Tony Atlas/Snuka and the 85 MSG Harts vs. Bulldogs. But everything else is worked that way. Yeah I enjoy watching Tully strut around the ring. And Hart Foundation are kind of fun as faces who used to be heels so still cheat, and Neidhart who really runs out of stuff to do as heel in that Bulldogs vs. Hart Foundation match, is fun as face and is probably a better face in peril than Bret. But it is WWF 80s tag wrestling. May be one of the better tag matches. But I'm not gonna claim that the structure is result of the NWA-WWF relationship or that it's a smily world where I want to watch this again.

#13: Barry Windham vs Dick Murdoch (2/16/85 Philadelphia, PA)- [RAVEN MACK]: You know, to be honest the greatest thing to come from this entire project for me personally is Kal Rudman. I never had heard of that guy as far as I can recall, and he is one creepy older bastard - the epitome of that bizarre corner character of the professional wrestling sub-culture - a quiet, unassuming latently homosexual who channels the repressions he feels from our society's uptight morals into COMPLETELY ENTHUSIASTICALLY BELIEVING IN THE KAYFABE! It is so motherfuckin' awesome. Watching him interview Barry Windham before this match is great, because you can visually see Windham get slightly unnerved a time or two as Rudman goes on and on, lyrically masturbating the young virile tag team champion, but Windham has to hold it together because that is all part of his job.

A lot of the matches I ended up loving from these 100 I loved not because they were great representatives of the WWF, but because they were great deviations from it. The ridiculous verbal orneriness of Murdoch in the pre-match face-off is fuckin' great as well - and you can't hear a word of it but watching you know what's going on - aging bastard bad-ass with an empty waist pissed at the young buck wearing a new belt that fits a little looser than it did on the previous owner.

Again, this seems like such a deviation from a WWF match to me, in Philly of all places. If you slapped this on a TV screen with no audio, I'd assume it was in Tampa for the Southern title. They keep going back to the jawjacking center-ring after a few stalemate tie-ups, and it's not until Windham lays a punch upside Murdoch's head that causes him to do that hilarious wobbling with legs in a split faceplant thing that Murdoch settles into his normal vicious redneck self, turning Windham the young buck into an old man's bitch for a few minutes. Windham makes the scientific comebacks here and there, but Murdoch retains control, finally flipping Windham over the top rope to escape the dreaded abdominal stretch. Then they turn it up, with Murdoch going into full-on crotchety bastard mode punching the fuck out of Windham with running blasts as the longhaired handsome kid shows his heart by always pulling at the ropes to hold himself up and try to get back into the ring. Finally, Windham drags Murdoch ringside too where he's finally forced to discover and unleash his inner-Murdoch, giving us a nice punching clinic between the two (as well as a clinic in selling a punch, which makes anyone's punches look better; judging from this the key is the wobble as opposed to a hard fall against the mat). Windham sneaks a quick pin, and Murdoch shortens his celebration with a couple of quick microphone blasts upside his face, and even though the old bastard is crazy as ever and beat

the shit out of the kid, the kid had too much heart. Ol' Kal Rudman probably ruined two pairs of cotton briefs watching this one.

#14: Dynamite Kid vs Bret Hart (9/14/85 Landover MD)- [ROB NAYLOR]: I'm a huge fan of this match. It was prior to Kid's major injuries and Bret was still pretty much finding his niche in the ring and really excelled here working with his old Stampede buddy. There was a bit of messed up rope running in this...but everything else was just so real. Bret's punches, kicks, falling elbows, legdrops etc...all looked precise and hurty.

Dynamite brought the super sudden forceful running clotheslines, falling knees to the face, yanked Bret up off his ass on the mat by his hair and also did a lot of fine wrestling.

Both of these guys really did a great job here and this match deserves a look if only for one of the most beautiful/damaging looking full body slams ever done by one wrestler to another onto a concrete floor. Seriously, you'll pop a Tylenol and hold YOUR back watching it over and over. Very fun match and very unlike most of the lethargic WWF wrestling I watched far too often in the 80's. I didn't think there was some huge and brilliant story to this match or anything, but my eyes were fixed on the ring the whole time, just cause both guys brought the high impact like mofos.

#15: Hart Foundation v. British Bulldogs- [PHIL SCHNEIDER]: I didn't really like most of the tag matches on this set. WWF 80's tag wrestling is pretty demonstrably inferior to even mediocre NWA stuff. This however was a pretty good approximation of good Southern tag wrestling. You had two nice face in peril sections, especially when Dynamite Kid was taking the beating. I don't rate Dynamite nearly as high as most people, but he will take some big bumps. Not just showy bumps to the floor, but just regular in ring bumps are taken with a ton of force. He took a chest bump into the ring corner at light speed, and a really nasty bodyslam on the concrete. Anvil is really useful as a guy who has nice clubbing forearms and bodyslams. The Harts do a nice job timing the hot tag, and the crowd pops big but I would have liked to see more emotion from Davey Boy on the apron, Jimmy Hart was doing all the work to hype the crowd. Really neat finish too, as the Hart Foundation had been switching without tags the whole match, and the finish had Dynamite hitting a big top rope headbut, behind the ref's back, and getting the pin.

#16: Randy Savage vs Ricky Steamboat (7/27/86 Toronto, Ontario, Canada, World)- [RAVEN MACK]: Ahh... grainy goodness, like wrestling is supposed to be for a wrestling nerd - dubbed seven times over and trading some shit you traded from someone else to get this or that. Steamboat in charge from the beginning, and this is more of a nice beginning to a series match, as it lacks a quarter of the intensity of the Wrestlemania 3 match which was yet to come. Actually, I rewatched this match almost immediately after watching the WM3 match, and it really really pales in comparison, but Savage in his prime was the best sneaky heel champ ever - even better than Flair who had more class as champion. Savage was a constant conniver, and it made it easier to get behind Steamboat's stupid Karate Kid get-up because Steamboat, to quote an overused wrestling announcer's phrase, didn't know the meaning of the word quit. Plus he had more heart in his little finger and all that other shit. After Savage tastes his blade from a

ringpost smash, you do start to believe Steamboat might win the belt, which is the most kayfabe-like suspension of reality you can really expect from a Vince McMahon's Sports Entertainment Machine title match. I'm also a huge mark for two guys fighting each other upright for half a minute locked into the beginning of a backslide pin attempt. And after Steamboat gets blinded with mystery foreign object substance, but still uses his Miyagi-esqueness to flip Savage ringside, they wratchet up the intensity, which means we get a quick countout ending because this is the WWE and they've got to cocktease you. A great match in setting up something further between the two, and also stands alone pretty well as long as you don't set it right beside their more famous one.

#17: Bret Hart vs. Ted DiBiase (3/8/89 Odessa TX aired Prime Time 3/20/89)-[RAVEN MACK]: One of the greatest things about this process is how I was forced to watch and re-watch all this '80s WWF, which I never gave a chance the first time around. I grew up a Mid-Atlantic kid, and felt fiercely loyal to Jim Crockett Promotions. The WWF was some alien shit with goofy gimmicks that had little in common with real wrasslin'. But I've been forced to re-evaluate a lot of what I thought. I've come to appreciate some folks I never liked before (like Tito Santana, who I've realized is far more Manny Fernandez-esque than his vanilla looks would lead you to believe), and I've come to appreciate some that I've always liked more for how they were still able to turn in some knucklebuster matches within the rigid confines of Vince McMahon's Sports Entertainment Machine, which I had always assumed, and probably not too incorrectly, was more concerned with putting over schticks and gimmicks to sell plastic dolls and t-shirts than hooking the public with a realistic pseudo-combat product to keep them coming back. McMahon was corporate convenience and slight sterility as compared to the territories' mom-and-pop customer service oriented product. However, even in that corporate structure, Ted DiBiase was the motherfuckin' man. (I've often figured his character was roughly based on McMahon himself, and perhaps Vince allowed DiBiase more leeway in time and style to have wide open great wrestling matches as a means of vicariously allowing himself to have great wrestling matches. I'm sure amongst McMahon's many perversions and degenerate behaviors, cuckoldism is not alien to him, so he'd have no problem imagining DiBiase's successes as his own.)

On the other end of the spectrum, through this project, I've acquired a deep hatred for a couple of wrestlers. I know Bret Hart is considered a great worker by interweb wrestling geek conventional wisdom, but he comes across to me while watching these great big batches of matches as someone who's technically proficient, but rather bland, and sort of just strings competent wrestling together unemotionally and expects that to be enough. He came across, overall, as a slightly more interesting Lance Storm.

This DiBiase match I enjoyed the fuck out of though. Hart, at first, is the fired-up young lion outwrestling the veteran, but once the momentum turn takes place, DiBiase turns into a fist machine. Hart is almost too good at seeming beat down during it all, making his kick outs and comeback attempts more exciting for the marks, and DiBiase's angered response to each schoolboy roll-up from nowhere reaffirms the whole mirage. The very ending with the spinning toehold by DiBiase emphatically kicked out of by Hart so that the Million Dollar Man fell on some forty dollar mats ringside, only promised more escalation, but they wrap up this early installment

of what I assume should've been a motherfuckin' awesome series of matches with a double countout while punching each other in the face ringside. Some good shit, and I'd be interested to know what happened between these two match-wise in the weeks and months after this.

#18: Ricky Steamboat vs Bret Hart (3/8/86 Boston MA)- [DEAN RASMUSSEN]: Bret Hart beats Steamboat's ass early and Steamboat is fun going all Shatner on the chop to escape and get his gi off. Steamboat does the fullbody chops to the head while yelling at Jimmy Hart, setting up later hijinx by former Corsair, no doubt. Dragon does big chops to the arm and Bret tells you of his agony as Steamboat uses a thousand ways to procure the armbar that makes me sooo hate Bob Backlund even more. Bret cheats to get in a flurry of offense before Steamboat does a fancy armdrag to cut him off. Yeah, Steamboat is better than Backlund. Steamboat fucking MAULS Hart's arm- crushing down with the knee onto the bone, driving the knee into the elbow while in the keylock. Steamboat fucking rules. Hart NECKBREAKS TO TRANSITION! Bret has a sweet looking headbutt and begins beating the dogshit out of the dragon. One of the things we all noticed about the dvd set is that Steamboat was a PSYCHO when it came to bumps as is evident by Steamboat flailing to the floor to set up the first nearfall. Bret sinks in a headlock and Steamboat CHOPS TO HOPESPOUT! and Bret kills him with a knee to the stomach. Steamboat with the desperation bodyslam but it's Knees City when he goes for the splash and bret starts kicking the fuck out of him- throwing him through the ropes and slamming him to the floor. Bret baits the rubes and takes Steamboat apart after the Dragon struggles back into the ring. Ricky shows his fighting spirit and has the Steamboat-level babyface comeback and Bret is crawling to the ropes for escape as they opt for a batch of nearfalls. I remember all of the nearfall spots from seeing Steamboat/Flair 400 times and Bret doesn't master the "I Have Nothing Left But I Somehow Kicked Out" thingy that flair was the master of, but the VISUAL FALL of Bret over Steamboat after the ref bump was kinda baffling before Ricky gets the pin. Ricky Steamboat is fucking great. Bret Hart wasn't great yet here but he was already hard edge which is what facilitated the later greatness. HIGHER!

#19: Ricky Steamboat vs Bob Orton Jr (7/20/85 Landover MD)- [ROB NAYLOR]: This was the best of 80's WWF wrestling to me. Two guys in somewhat of their athletic primes (you could argue that Orton's was two years prior in Mid-Atlantic) just going to the ring and calling it on the fly and looking like two smooth technicians and executioners that each were.

The opening portion of this with Steamer getting the armbars off the fluid looking armdrags on Orton was good stuff.

Orton's punching and his use of his "injured" arm really was consistently a great story for all of his eighties matches. Except, he didn't wrestle to many guys who could sell his ass off like Steamer for most of the eighties, so this stood out.

The crowds in this venue were always hot and this match was no different. I dug when Orton took the coke and threw it in Steamboat's eyes. Very erratic use of a "foreign object" and it seemed to get the crowd hyped up.

#20: Hulk Hogan vs. Big Bossman (3/18/89 MSG)- [RAVEN MACK]: A Hulk Hogan match from Vince McMahon's Sports Entertainment Machine is basically a Hulk Hogan match - he rips off his shirt and fucks shit up, then something nefarious happens and he gets beat up for a while, but then he no-sells punches and fucks shit up for the finale. So of all the Hogan matches that were in the nomination process, they basically seemed good not because they were good but in spite of the normal Hogan match formula - in other words, how could someone drag something just barely outside that tired structure from locking up with Hogan.

Big Bubba Rogers did not seem like a main event caliber character, but somehow The Big Bossman's goofy schtick is just believable enough when played by Ray Traylor to make you think, "Hey, this redneck bastard loves to beat people."

I've never fully understood the cage match as a race to escape concept, having grown up in the Mid-Atlantic territory where cages were meant to violently settle feuds without fear of outside interference. Why would you want to escape your most hated opponent? It seems cowardly.

But what makes this match is not just it straying from the usual Hogan formula, nor Bossman seeming like 75% deranged redneck c.o./25% formidable wrestler - it's Bossman saying, "Fuck mailing shit in, why don't I trust your lazy ass to superplex me off the cage to make this shit more than another one of your bullshit matches." That one spot kicked the intensity up, and made the rest of a near-formulaic Hogan match seem nineteen times more interesting. Throw in Bossman being Hogan's equal offensively here and there (very un-Hogan match like, as usually his title defenses were NCAA tourney 2 seeds vs. 15 seeds matches, with Hogan playing the 2 seed - the most you could really hope for in the back of your mind was for the 15 to still be close at halftime), and a big fat bladejob by Bossman, sprinkle with the irony of him being handcuffed to the ropes with his own cuffs to allow Hogan to escape unimpeded, and serve up with Slick getting some just desserts with a couple of knocks upside his jive head, and you've got one of the tastier '80s Hogan matches you're gonna come across.

There is also THE HATE.

THE STATS and ANALYSIS by CHRIS HARRINGTON.
(go here for the CHARTZ and WAAAAAY deep analysis!)

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

So, what matches do people generally agree and disagree on the most?

Let's look at the TOP 10 matches (as ranked by total number of points)

01. Sgt Slaughter vs Iron Sheik (6/16/84 MSG) 11,944 points
02. Ricky Steamboat vs Randy Savage (3/29/87 Pontiac MI Wrestlemania 3) 11,575 points
03. Adrian Adonis/Dick Murdoch vs Brisco Brothers (12/28/84 MSG) 11,137 points
04. Bret Hart vs Randy Savage (Seattle WA 11/11/87 aired SNME 11/28/87) 10,100 points
05. Bret Hart vs Mr Perfect (10/2/89 Wheeling WV) 9,974 points
06. Bob Backlund vs Adrian Adonis (1/18/82 MSG) 9,971 points

07. Greg Valentine vs Ron Garvin (9/30/89 MSG) 9,622 points
08. Glamour Girls vs Jumping Bomb Angels (11/24/87 MSG) 9,449 points
09. Ricky Steamboat vs Jake Roberts (8/9/86 Boston MA) 9,399 points
10. Sgt Slaughter vs Iron Sheik (5/21/84 MSG) 9,395 points

Immediately, it's obvious that the top three matches were really running far and away from everyone else.

FIRST PLACE: Slaughter/Sheik (6/14/84 MSG)

#1: 63 votes, 53% of ballots

#2: 23 votes, 19% of ballots

#3: 4 votes, 3% of ballots

TOP FIVE: 103 votes, 87% of ballots

TOP TEN: 109 votes, 92% of ballots

SECOND PLACE: Steamboat/Savage (3/29/87 WM3)

#1: 17 votes, 14% of ballots

#2: 29 votes, 24% of ballots

#3: 19 votes, 16% of ballots

TOP FIVE: 78 votes, 66% of ballots

TOP TEN: 100 votes, 84% of ballots

THIRD PLACE: Adrian Adonis/Dick Murdoch vs Brisco Brothers (12/28/84 MSG)

#1: 16 votes, 13% of ballots

#2: 12 votes, 10% of ballots

#3: 25 votes, 21% of ballots

TOP FIVE: 63% of ballots

TOP TEN: 73% of ballots

No other match was even nominated for the top 10 by more than 50% of the voters!
(4th : 33%, 5th : 42%, 6th : 42%, 7th: 37%, 8th: 25%, 9th: 30%, 10th: 28%)

Let's look at the BOTTOM TEN matches as determined by points.

100. Andre Giant vs Killer Khan (11/14/81 Philadelphia PA) 1,114

099. Randy Savage vs Tito Santana (3/16/86 MSG) 1,523

098. Hulk Hogan vs Nikolai Volkoff (10/3/85 East Rutherford NJ aired SNME 10/5/85) 1,732

097. Johnny Rodz vs Kuniaki "Chin" Kobayashi (11/25/82 Philadelphia PA) 1,892

096. Hulk Hogan vs Don Muraco (6/21/85 MSG) 2,255

095. Hulk Hogan vs Ted DiBiase (3/12/88 Philadelphia PA) 2,276

094. Hulk Hogan vs David Shultz (6/17/84 Minneapolis MN) 2,473

093. Don Muraco vs Pedro Morales (11/23/81 MSG) 2,601

092. Randy Savage vs Bad News Brown (1/16/89 Hamilton Ontario) 2,700

091. Hulk Hogan vs Don Muraco (5/20/85 MSG) 2,773

#99 and #100 both had over 70% of the voters placing them in the bottom ten matches. #94, #97, #98 all had more than 50% of the voters listing them in the bottom ten matches.

Now, which matches did people rank most similarly? Here are the matches with lowest standard deviations:

002. Ricky Steamboat vs Randy Savage (3/29/87 Pontiac MI Wrestlemania 3) 10.43
100. Andre Giant vs Killer Khan (11/14/81 Philadelphia PA) 10.63
001. Sgt Slaughter vs Iron Sheik (6/16/84 MSG) 12.85
098. Hulk Hogan vs Nikolai Volkoff (10/3/85 East Rutherford NJ aired SNME 10/5/85) 14.18
096. Hulk Hogan vs Don Muraco (6/21/85 MSG) 14.30
017. Bret Hart vs Ted DiBiase (3/8/89 Odessa TX aired Prime Time 3/20/89) 14.63
004. Bret Hart vs Randy Savage (Seattle WA 11/11/87 aired SNME 11/28/87) 14.91
097. Johnny Rodz vs Kuniaki "Chin" Kobayashi (11/25/82 Philadelphia PA) 15.03
076. Bruno Sammartino/Paul Orndorff vs Roddy Piper/Bob Orton Jr (10/26/85 Philadelphia PA) 15.54
005. Bret Hart vs Mr Perfect (10/2/89 Wheeling WV) 15.57

We've already established that #1 and #2 had very strong consensus following that they were very good matches in the upper echelon. Interesting, there was also a strong consensus on the stinkers. "Andre the Giant vs Killer Khan" received 25 votes for the worst match (21% of the voters) and 73% of the votes putting it in the bottom ten.

Those were the matches that had rankings that were most concentrated in a certain range (though note, you'd still have quite a range covered within the two standard deviation rule!), we should also consider the matches with the largest standard deviations. They were:

65. Bob Backlund vs Hulk Hogan (4/8/80 Philadelphia PA) 29.76
55. Survivor Series 1987 11/26/87 Richfield OH 29.04
53. Hulk Hogan vs Randy Savage (4/2/89 Atlantic City NJ Wrestlemania 5) 28.64
41. Tito Santana vs Ron Bass (8/22/87 MSG) 28.61
40. Adrian Adonis/Dick Murdoch vs Sgt Slaughter/Terry Daniels (7/23/84 MSG) 27.54
54. Tito Santana vs Paul Orndorff (9/1/84 St Louis MO) 27.30
27. Bob Backlund vs Adrian Adonis (3/20/82 Philadelphia PA) 26.70
26. Pat Patterson vs Sgt Slaughter (5/4/81 MSG) 26.48
57. Les Thornton vs Mr Wrestling II (3/2/85 Atlanta GA) 26.35
49. 11/24/88 Richfield OH 1988 Survivor Series 24.24

Perhaps it would be intriguing in the future to have several people write reviews of these matches to discuss what different aspects people seemed to love and hate about them!

Most interestingly, both Survivor Series Match fall into this grey area that could be dubbed "most debated". 61% of voters ranked the 1988 Survivor Series Match as better than the 1987 Survivor Series. Interesting, voters seemed to strongly prefer the one match over the other! On

average, a voter would rank the other Survivor Series match about twenty places lower than whichever was their favorite.

~!~

The Gracie Fighting Championships Presents: Hammer House Versus Gracie, March 3, 2006.

[Blockhead Dan]

I have plenty of discs sent to me recently that I've been thinking of reviewing, but no one card has intrigued me as much as this one. Gracie versus Hammer House: two names that don't mean anywhere near as much as they once was. Two teams that were once thought to be unstoppable. Of course, the Gracie name still rings as legend, while Hammer House is a punchline waiting for a set-up. But they have Wes SIMS, so it's not all bad. Plus they added Matt Lindland to their "team" for one night, presumably because, you know, Hammer House and Team Quest are both based in wrestling. Of course, Team Quest combines wrestling with rigorous conditioning, smart game-planning and an all-around skillset. Hammer House combines wrestling with bodybuilding and looking good for Japanese Cameras.

And Wes SIMS.

Match One: Ben Rothwell vs Dan Bobish: Dan Bobish enjoyed a run in the Takada Monster Army when DSE realized he was too bad to put on the Pride cards and replaced him with Giant Silva. He was in one of my favorite matches of the bad kind where he lay on top of Mark Hunt attempting a ground and pound and gassed leading to a quick Hunt KO when they ended up back on their feet. This is a great card already.

Wait, before the match we have the world's whitest Kodo Drumming troupe. Well, to be fair, they are in Columbus, OH and there probably is a whiter Kodo Drumming troupe somewhere in Minnesota. Bas Rutten's twin brother Boss Rutten is on commentary. Then the commentators talk about the Daniel Gracie versus Wes SIMS match while showing a clip of Rallan Gracie! This is amazing.

As is standard, they review the rules and number five: NO DEFENSE! Yes, in other MMA promotions the match will stop when someone fails to defend themselves intelligently, apparently tonight the match will stop if someone DOES defend themselves intelligently and a DQ will be awarded.

Okay, now we're starting. Bobish represents Team Hammer House, of course. Rothwell is representing Gracie Miletich and comes from Wisconsin. Bobish is as round as ever. Rothwell is doughy as well, tipping the scales at 277. Bobish, for the records, is 330.

The non-Rutten commentator says, with heavyweights you never blink, you might miss something. Usually what you miss is heavy breathing and circling, unless he means blink as in you take a nap. Bobish attempts the only move he knows, the shoot, which is being generous. His shoot is less like a bullet fired from a gun and more like an underhand lob. Of course, as soon as I type this he hits a beautiful belly-to-belly, the type that Yoshihiro Takayama would attempt and fail at least once every MMA bout. Rothwell, however, gets guard by, well, he didn't really do anything fancy. Maybe he asked nicely. Bobish attempts some ground and pound, which Rothwell counters with ILLEGAL defense. This goes on for four minutes. Can I blink yet? Rothwell gets up and Bobish is gassed. Wait, I've seen this before. Rothwell is no Mark Hunt, so it takes several blows and a well placed knee to fell the Buffalo. In Bobish's defense, he could've stopped the knee if he was allowed to defend himself. (Gracie 1, Hammer 0)

MATCH 2: Vitor "Shaolin" Ribiero vs Chris Brennan: Before the fight, Brennan was asked what he thought of Ribiero and Brennan responded "he's awesome." Indeed. Brennan is one of those names that's been around for so long you almost wonder if he's as good as you think or you're just used to seeing him rounding out B shows. Ribiero has been considered one of the best 155 pounders in the world until two large tournaments in Japan shuffled the order and placed Takanori Gomi firmly on top.

They start off with some feeling out jabs before Vitor hits a rapid combination into a takedown into half-mount. Some work before Brennan grabs an ankle which leads to a reversal of position. Back on their feet and Ribiero is easily punching around Brennan's blocks. In Brennan's defense, he's probably remembering that defense is ILLEGAL. Back on the ground, Ribiero peppers away from Brennan's guard or half-guard until Brennan goes for a heel hook. I see his strategy now. Lure Ribiero into a false sense of security and get a heel hook! Well it didn't work this time either, but maybe the third time's a charm, Chris. Despite my smarm, a good first round, although indoubtably Ribiero's on the score cards.

Round two starts when Ribiero pretty much shoves Brennan down. Half-guard becomes sidemount becomes knee in the belly with little struggle. Brennan gets back to his feet, despite coming close to being stopped, which causes the commentator to say he has heart. Heart, incidentally, in MMA terms means you don't have enough skill to win and are too dumb to realize it. Sometimes heart is rewarded, however. In this case it's rewarded by Brennan being taken back down and being pounded on some more. The ref calls for a doctor check and the heart ends. The ref, or was it the doctor, calls the match off. Brennan complains as he wanted to be taken down and pounded some more. (Gracie 2, Hammer 0)

In all fairness, Brennan is a talented fighter. Ribiero, however is a world class fighter. The difference is on display here.

Match Three: Rhallan Gracie vs Dennis Hazelett: Hazelett is introduced to the crowd as Matt Lindland. I guess I can see the confusion. They're both... white... with beards. Yeah, it was the beards that threw them off. Gracie looks like, well, a Gracie; athletic and little bit thuggish. Hazelett looks like someone who works in a drive-through liquor store off route 58. Gracie has

four inches and four pounds on Hazelett. You have to wonder if his father (Relson) didn't help make this match. I'm all excited that Don Frye is a judge, but then I see that it's actually Don Fry. Maybe he's friends with Boss Rutten.

Rhallan gets double underhooks and, eventually, a takedown to end up in Hazelett's guard. Gracie, slowly, attempts either an arm triangle or chest smother. Hazelett counters by contorting his body and attempting an arm-bar. It breaks the submission. Hazelett then goes for a triangle, then an omo plata, then an armbar, then a triangle. Holy Nogueira, Batman, he's sinking in a triangle on Rhallan GRACIE. No. ARMBAR? No. TRIANGLE? Gracie is visibly sluggish, but gets a leg in to leverage his way out. I'm impressed with this jiu-jitsu match so far. Yamazaki stands them up with ten seconds left, so of course that ends the round. A tough one to call. Hazelett had the better submission attempts but if the Ohio judges score like Vegas judges, Gracie might get the round for the one takedown and a few weak punches from the guard.

In between rounds, Renzo shouts at Rhallan in Portuguese. I picked up some during my time living in Winter Hill, so I think he's saying, "what are you doing out there. You're embarrassing your whole family. Keep fighting like that and we'll disown you. We own a trademark on the name, you know. We'll make you change it to Rhallan Smith."

Smith gets the takedown to start round two and lands several nuisance elbows for far longer than you could claim is being active. Hazelett gets guard eventually, and nearly secures an armbar. Smith has yet to really attempt a submission, but manages to block Hazelett once again, only this time ends up on his back in Hazelett's sidemount. Ah, there's a submission attempt by Gracie, an arm-bar to be precise, although it does little other than force Hazelett into the guard where Rhallan tries to hold on and wait for the bell. Near the bell he hits an illegal upkick. He also hit an illegal knee earlier on. Of course, the name of the promoter is also Gracie, so you have to wonder if Yamazaki isn't being selectively blind here.

Round three starts off and Gracie is given nearly a minute to slowly work on a takedown. Gracie goes for this first offensive submission attempt of the night, another armbar, but ends up having to pull guard instead. He goes for a triangle, but doesn't quite secure it. They scramble for submissions, nearly doing the Pancrase dueling leglocks, before ending up exhausted and not moving and the ref stands them up. On their feet, Hazelett is visibly the more tired of the two, although Gracie is hardly ready for more than a glass of watermelon juice. Gracie bulls Hazelett into the ropes... and through them. RHALLAN GRACIE HAS WON THE SPRING BASHO! Oh wait, wrong sport. They restart and Hazelett gets his first takedown of the match. At the ending seconds, Hazelett stands over Gracie and throws a bunch of punches. Ironically enough, this last round would be the best chance for Hazelett to score on the cards if this is judged like in Nevada since he threw more punches and got the takedown, even though Gracie had his best round. I think the first two will go to Gracie for the same reason, even though Hazelett was setting the pace and coming closer to finishing. So while Gracie will win the decision, I'm coming away more impressed with Hazelett than Smith. (GracieSmith 3, Hammer 0)

Whoa, I'm wrong. Hazelett gets the split decision and rightfully so. Word has it the judges were fired by the promoter after the match. (Gracie 2, Hammer 1)

MATCH FOUR: Gustavo "Ximu" Machado vs Mike Pyle: Pyle is not to be confused with Mike Kyle. Ximu is not to be confused with a once-trendy malternative that came ten years before trendy malternatives were popular. Actually, Ximu is apparently pronounced "emo" although I don't see Machado as the type who'd be lining up outside the B-Side Lounge. MORE LOCAL HUMOUR!

They stand and throw a few shots back and forth. Pyle is punching better but Machado is getting nice leg and mid-kicks. Pyle hits a right hand that backs Machado up and drops him and then pounces on him. Since Machado is forbidden from defending himself, he eats a lot of punches and the ref calls for a stop. (Gracie 2, Hammer 2)

MATCH FIVE: Forrest Petz v. Daniel Moraes: Moraes takes Petz down in short order and then passes from half-mount into full mount. Moraes just kind of grinds away for three minutes before Petz escapes. They then circle one another for a minute. They tease a slugfest, but it only last five seconds before they return to circling. Yep, that's the entire round. Maybe if defense wasn't ILLEGAL they'd be willing to take more chances.

Moraes tries for a takedown to start round two, but Petz learned how to defend in between rounds. Here's something I notice as a difference between A and B shows. On an A show a takedown attempt usually takes time. The person acting has to change strategies to secure it as he goes, while the person reacting rarely ever lets it happen. On a B show, the takedown usually either comes immediately or the aggressor gives up after a modicum of resistance. Maybe that's oversimplifying, reread that speaking about A or B fighters instead. Moraes tries for another takedown and Petz goes for another sprawl and they break. Yep, B fighters. Circle, shoot, sprawl, circle, shoot, sprawl, low blow, after a break Moraes mixes is up a bit throwing a body shot before the shoot, sprawl and so on. Good thing I'm watching this match before bed since this is putting me to sleep. Hey, Petz finally forgot to sprawl, now Moraes can grind away at him. The ref stands them up because nothing was happening. Hey, nothing was happening for the other four minutes, why didn't he do anything about it then? Petz finally shows up and throws a bunch of punches, none of which get past Moraes's ILLEGAL defense. End of round.

Round three isn't even worth mentioning. Moraes shoots a few times and Petz sprawls every time. Every time Moraes tries to pull guard and Petz walks away. Finally Moraes just refuses to get up and Petz won. THIS was on PPV? People paid for this shit? Petz raises his hands like he won something. Way to go Petz, you were not as horrible as Daniel Moraes. You were slightly, eversoslightly, less unimpressive. A hard waited-out win for you. (Gracie 2, Hammer 3)

MATCH SIX: Fabio Leopoldo v. Matt Lindland: For those of you not paying attention, Matt Lindland is the man. His wrestling credentials are nearly unrivalled in MMA and, unlike Karam Ibrahim, he's made the transition to MMA very well; an outstanding record of 17-3 with only four

of those wins by decision, none of them boring unless you're the type that thinks an excellent wrestler constantly working to improve position and finish a fight is boring.

The guy who isn't Bas Rutten says it's going to be a matter of execution that separates these guys. This would be called foreshadowing. Bas Rutten says of Lindland, "he has phenomenal takedowns. Once he gets the clinch, whoa, Fabio's gonna fly." This would also be called foreshadowing. One of them was intentional. I'll let you decipher which.

As the ring announcer recites the judges and ref, Lindland looks pissed off and impatient. He is a scary, scary man when he is angry. The bell rings and Lindland throws a few punches which leads Leopoldo to go for an ankle pick. Lindland grabs the guillotine and then uses balance and bodyweight to avoid the takedown while sinking it in tight. It doesn't stop it, but it delays it and the guillotine is hooked. Lindland, however, is not the best submission artist, so Leopoldo is able to wriggle his neck out. It probably helped that his neck is bigger than his head, though. It ends up with Lindland having a half-guard which is one of his favorite positions. He traps Leopoldo's legs and shifts up. Leopoldo has enough wherewithal to not get reversed, and gets a crucifix, but Lindland pulls out and switches into sidemount. Lindland drops elbows, picking his shots as Leopoldo tries to buck him and fails. Eventually Leopoldo gets to guard and the ref restarts them in the center. Lindland stands up out of guard and throws some punches from his feet. He then decides to go back into Leopoldo's guard and do some more. I half figure that the thought process was "fuck it, this guy's not doing anything to me, I don't need to be scared of his guard. I'm Matt FUCKING Lindland." This time Leopoldo pushes him out of the guard. Lindland soccer kicks him in the buttocks, drops a big punch and heads back into the guard for a few more. For some reason the last ten seconds of the round were cut off, but I'm going to assume that Lindland continued to drop elbows and walked away with the round.

The second round starts and this time Leopoldo tries to start with a guillotine. Lindland shrugs him off and pushes him down. He rains down elbows as Don Fry(e) looks on in appreciation. Knowing Don Frye, he's probably thinking he'd like to face Matt Lindland because he thinks he could outwrestle him. Don Frye has more balls than brains like that. This is all from Leopoldo's half-guard. Rutten keeps saying that he thinks Lindland should go for side-mount, but Lindland uses half-guard very well. He hooks the leg of his opponent which allows him to sit up more easily, push back with one arm and drop bombs with the other. This technique is slowly being picked up in MMA, Pe De Pano used it against Frank Mir recently, but it started with this man here. After two minutes of being beaten from the half-guard, Leopoldo wriggles back into guard and grabs Lindland's wrists, begging for mercy. He pushes Lindland away with his feet, but Lindland just falls forward with a punch and scoots into half-mount. Leopoldo tucks his head into Lindland's leg and guards, turtling up leaving only the back of his head (illegal to strike) open, so Lindland drives the point of his elbow into Leopoldo's ribs over and over again. Leopoldo tries to change position but all he does is provide target practice for Lindland's elbows. Ribs, stomach, chest, ear, mouth. The crowd is shouting along with each blow. Leopoldo is probably shouting on the inside. Lindland teases the armbar and then says to hell with it and punches Leopoldo some more. Leopoldo pushes Lindland away once more and Lindland drops back in, punching away again. This time to avoid punishment, Leopoldo gives up his back! The jiu jitsu guy gives

up his back! Leopoldo wriggles around and ends up back where Lindland wants him, in the semi-mount. The camera cuts just in time to catch Lindland laying a perfect elbow to the side of Leopoldo's head. Lindland pauses after delivering it as if to make sure Leopoldo not only felt it, but realizes he felt it. Leopoldo is out of gas, looking up at the lights as if he's praying for the hand of God to come down and deliver him from the match. The barrage of shots continues to the head and stomach of Fabio Leopoldo. With ten seconds to go, Lindland gets full mount and peppers left, right, left, right as Leopoldo curls up and curses the day he ever thought he'd be a fighter, something breaking deep inside, as if he's not only lost the will to fight, but resigned himself to the fact that he will forever be Matt Lindland's bitch.

Leopoldo can't even look at Renzo Gracie between rounds. Gracie tries to shout words of encouragement at Leopoldo, but all Leopoldo can do is hope that the end comes soon. Gracie literally takes Leopoldo's head and pulls it towards him.

Round three and Lindland grabs the clinch, he knees Leopoldo in the legs and Leopoldo pulls him away and, whoa, Leopoldo goes flying. German Suplex, the Silver Medal Style. Knees and elbows and fists. Rutten comments that Lindland is very entertaining. The other commentator posits that Lindland must've been frustrated all those years he was a Greco-Roman wrestler that he couldn't hit anybody. The ref calls for a break as Leopoldo ceases to have an eyebrow. Leopoldo can't even lift his head to face the doctor. Renzo runs over to yell at him in Portuguese. The match continues and Leopoldo has the look on his face of a man heading to the gas chamber. They return to the half-guard and Leopoldo just flops on the mat, such is his life. Matt Lindland is his cross that he must bear, his crown of thorns applied with elbows. Elbows, punches, kicks to the leg, punches falling from on high raining fire on to Leopoldo. Again Leopoldo's face is red, not from blushing and the ref steps in and calls time. Lindland walks near his corner and waves up the crowd, who reply with applause. Still no reprieve, Leopoldo returns to the mat to take his beating once more. Thank you sir, may I please have another. Lindland is willing to oblige. One wonders if Leopoldo's new strategy is to take enough of a beating that Lindland will give up trying to beat him and throw in the towel out of mercy. Unfortunately for Leopoldo, when it's fight time, Lindland knows only punishment. "If they had a purple heart in mixed martial arts, he might get that tonight." Ten seconds later and the ref almost calls for a check for a third time, but decides to let it go. Lindland looks as refreshed as when he entered and lays down a beating on the corpse of Fabio Leopoldo as the crowd begs the ref to put an end to the slaughter. Leopoldo attempts to roll away and Lindland gets a rear naked choke. Leopoldo somehow finds the wherewithal to grab Lindland's hand and pull down, running strictly on jiu jitsu instinct. He can't be running on blood, it's all on his face. Leopoldo here is showing true heart. Trying one last time to do what he can to simply not lose, but as Lindland starts to shift into mount he concedes to the inevitable and taps out to fate.

After the bout Lindland is ready for more. He is a monster who feeds on souls. He calls out Ryan Gracie. I don't think he wants a fight down the road. "I could've finished that kid in the first, I just wanted to beat on him, like I'll do to Ryan." This is the man people call boring? Forrest Petz, Daniel Moraes, they were boring. Kevin Jordan, Gabriel Gonzaga, that was boring. Watching heavyweights beat up on middleweights, that's boring. This man is not boring. The

only thing boring about Matt Lindland is that his domination is so absolute. (Gracie 2, Hammer 4)

In order to allow us to catch our breath, to recover from the shock and horror of witnessing a live execution, we get an award presentation. Joe Frazier receives the Arnold Fitness award or whatever it's called. A lifetime of punches to the head have left him worse for wear. He should give Leopoldo some tips on what to expect.

And now, from the sublime to the wacky.

Match 7: Daniel Gracie v. Wes SIMS: Lindland represents the height of skill that I love in MMA. Wes SIMS represents the goofiness that I love in all facets of life. SIMS, my friends, is not just a name but an acronym. It stands for STRONG, IMMENSE, MUSCULAR, SUCCESSFUL. He cuts some of the best heel promos in MMA or pro-wrestling today. Not tonight, though.

They clinch, or more aptly, Gracie clinches SIMS and SIMS leans against the ropes delivering punches and knees with a wide flail. They buck back and forth and SIMS hits the lanky knee. SIMS's knees actually look solid. His punches, however, are strictly flappy. SIMS keeps using the ropes to avoid a takedown; not grabbing them (much) just using them to support his weight, but Gracie perseveres and gets the takedown. He walks into a mounted arm-triangle since Wes SIMS has all the ground skills of, well, Team Hammer House, just without the wrestling. SIMS, however, CANNOT BE CHOKED! as Frank Mir learned many moons ago. Gracie thinks about things for a bit and then attempts an arm-bar. SIMS counters by making sure the ref is on the other side of Gracie and knees him in the face. WES SIMS! The horn sounds and SIMS stands up and flips Gracie the bird. Renzo hops in and rubs SIMS on the head, like a precocious child. Renzo is a smart man. The insightful advice from Coleman in SIMS's corner: C'MON! Renzo shouts at Daniel Gracie in Portugese and again, I think I can decipher it. "This guy's a big goof. He hasn't won a fight since Coleman stopped picking his matches. Beat him and maybe Pride will put you in their openweight tournament. You can beat up on a lightweight. C'MON!"

SIMS starts with a limp kick and Gracie takes him down. Gracie gets back control and goes for a rear naked. While Leopoldo was able to automatically begin to counter the hold, SIMS can do little more than flail and hope something works. He grabs Gracie's feet and tickles his toes or something. It works. The non-Bas commentator says, unintentionally damning with faint praise, that SIMS made "a professional move". SIMS follows it up with a headbutt, which are illegal and Yamazaki saw that one, calls for a standup and deducts a point from SIMS. They restart and SIMS lands a knee. He follows up by raising his arms and then pounces on Gracie. Sims, however, does little more than flap and slap and Gracie recovers. SIMS punches himself out (slaps himself out, more aptly) allowing Gracie to attempt an armbar. SIMS escapes and Gracie is also seeming fatigued, he turtles up and SIMS looks to the audience and gently takes back-control. He lays more love taps on Gracie. With ten seconds left, Gracie reverses position and lays in a few shots, including a couple of knees on the downed SIMS. Those are also illegal. SIMS complains. Coleman tries to encourage him to stand up. They bring up the chyron to review the rules once more. Number four clearly states no knees or kicks while opponent is

down. Keep in mind, number five is still NO DEFENSE and headbutts are not mentioned at all. Coleman protests to the ref and crowd that Gracie landed three knees. THREE KNEES. The crowd boos, the ring announcer says there's another bout to come. What could possibly follow this?

Gracie was announced the winner, but the decision was changed to No Contest later. SIMS gets his neck braced and stretched out. It's amazing how stuff like this always happens to him. Rutten gets in the ring and asks Gracie about the knees as the crowd loudly boos. "Please, people, I am not a dirty fighter. I will fight him again if you want his revenge."

Rutten, in correspondence with FCC regulations, asks Mark Coleman for his official reply. "Great night! Thanks everyone for coming!" It's no wonder Team Hammer House never wins the big elections even though they're stronger on policy. "Hammer House Baby, WE WON TONIGHT! Hammer House! Hammer House! Thank you." Rutten keeps trying to pull the mic away as Coleman clutches his hands.

Lumpy heavyweights, top flight lightweights, a jiu jitsu clinic, a flash KO, a nightmare inducing performance by Matt Lindland, the devourer of souls and the beauty that is Wes SIMS. This card truly had it all. It even had a mind numbingly boring abortion of a match just to make sure it covered all the ground. Run over your mother to see this card and then knee her while she's down for good measure. A MILLION, BILLION STARS.

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PHIL SCHNEIDER'S ON-GOING TOP 20 of 2006

Here is the current list, reviews for the older matches are in previous DVDVR's

1. Finlay v. Rey Mysterio WWE 3/20
2. La Mascara/El Hijo Del Santo v. Blue Panther/Tarzan Boy CMLL GDL 1/1
3. Rey Mysterio v. Mark Henry WWE 1/15
4. Rey Mysterio/Bobby Lashley/Chris Benoit v. JBL/Finlay/Randy Orton WWE 2/23
5. Samoa Joe v. Necro Butcher IWA-MS 1/12
6. Juventud v. Kid Kash WWE 1/3
7. Undertaker v. Kurt Angle WWE 2/19
8. KENTA/Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone v. Kenta Kobashi/Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Tamon Honda NOAH 2/17
9. KUDO & MIKAMI v. Yoshiaki Yago & MIYAWAKI Chikara 2/24
10. Finlay/JBL v. Lashley/Chris Benoit WWE 2/16
11. Finlay v. Chris Benoit WWE 1/30
12. Samoa Joe v. BJ Whitmer ROH 1/14
13. Shadow WX/Mammoth Sasaki v. Abdullah Kobayashi/Daisuke Sekimoto BJW 1/27/06
14. Chris Benoit v. Randy Orton WWE 1/24
15. Milano Collection AT/Skyde v. Claudio Castagnoli/ Chris Hero Chikara 2/26
16. A.J. Styles v. Matt Sydal ROH 1/14

17. HHH v. Big Show WWE 2/13

1. Finlay v. Rey Mysterio WWE 3/20: You have to love the fact that week after week Smackdown is just busting out awesome matches. Here you have the best heel in wrestling facing the best babyface in wrestling for 15+ minutes on free TV. Really can't ask much more then that. Finlay is amazing here, just killing Rey at the start, I mean the initial beating was almost Finlay on Lorenzo level bad. It got to the point where Tomk complained that Rey went too long without any offense, when we went back and checked it was only 90 seconds of control. You know you are kicking someones ass, when 90 seconds seems like an eternity Rey had some nice mini comebacks in the early part, including a 619 miss immediately into a sliding dropkick. Then Finlay had another great ring skirt spot, where he balls Rey into the skirt and just kicks the crap out of him. Finlay was almost at Arn level here at stooging for Rey's big spots, but still maintaining his aura as an asskicker. I didn't even mind the finish, as Finlay did a great job of distracting the ref, and Orton's RKO looked really good.

7. KENTA/Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone v. Kenta Kobashi/Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Tamon Honda NOAH 2/17: NOAH six-man tags are usually pretty hit and miss affairs. At their best, they can be amazing, at their worst they can be really dull. This wasn't an absolute high end NOAH trios match, but it was pretty darn good. They were trying to tell allot of stories here, almost too many. KENTA and Kenta Kobashi have a singles match coming up, and KENTA is trying to prove he is at Kobashi's level, Kobashi and Honda are looking to get a shot at Yone and Morishima's tag belts, Kanemaru want's a shot at KENTA's junior belt, and Morishima and KENTA are tagging, but don't like each other. Probably too much going on, as the dissension stuff especially felt kind of tagged on. There was also a long section where the KENTA team works over Kanemaru, which was pretty dull. KENTA and Kenta Kobashi had some really fun interactions, with KENTA being a totally cock, giving Kobashi little kicks to the face and trying to pin him with one foot. The match also had a lot of fun Tamon Honda, who when he is on, is on of my favorite guys in NOAH to watch, we get a bunch of Olympic Hell variations here including an awesome one where he hangs KENTA off the ring apron in a Hell, plus headbutts and a really hot finish where he just flattens Yone's fro with his awesome delayed German. Honda and Kobashi also have a bunch of fun double teams involving chops, which I don't remember them having when they actually had the tag belts. The real star in this match was Morishima, he was just a total beast in this, just killing everyone whenever he tagged in. He should be the young guy they push, as he looks more like a superstar, then any other young guy in Japan.

9. KUDO & MIKAMI v. Yoshiaki Yago & MIYAWAKI Chikara 2/24: This match got a lot of hype from people who watched it live, but I really wasn't expecting to like it very much. Pretty smooth chested Japanese juniors doing endless spotfests is pretty much my least favorite type of wrestling, I hated KUDO and MIKAMI in their Differ Cup match, and I just expected a watered down Differ Cup match here. My spirits picked up a bit when I saw how ugly Yago and MIYAWAKI were in their opening match, only Toryuman matches I ever really liked had ugly ass SUWA in them, and Yago's bowl haircut and MIYAWAKI's dirtbag methead look gave me some optimism.

The match itself ended up being pretty great, instead of hitting a billion spots, the K-Dojo team just beats the shit out KUDO. They totally tear up his leg, which he does an awesome job of selling. Yago is a monster here, and I could see why he came off this weekend as the biggest star. There is an audible thump everytime a shot lands. My favorite part of the match was probably the opening kick exchange between Yago and KUDO, unlike most strike exchange, the sequence was as much about Yago's defense as it was about the stiffness of the kicks. Mike Quakenbush is the best commentator in the U.S., and he does this really Teddy Atlasish call, where he analyzes strategy. he does a great job breaking down what each team is doing here. They had one hot finish with everyone hitting big spots, including a super nasty Dragon suplex. Because it only happened once at the end of the match, it worked much better then it does in allot of those Differish tags, which have dozens of those sequences, to the point where they don't mean anything.

15. Milano Collection AT/Skyde v. Claudio Castagnoli/ Chris Hero Chikara 2/26: This was the final of the Chikara Tag World Grand Prix, which was a tourney that I was shocked at how much I loved. Hero is a guy who has been hit and miss for the last couple of years, but the King of Wrestling tag team is my favorite Hero run in quite a while. You don't get a ton of masturbatory matwork, just alot of fun double teams, shtick and rudo bumping. Skyde is a guy who is consistently fun, but I have never seen him put it together before like this match. He was incredible here, his stuff with Claudio is Blue Panther v. Santo level beautiful. There is a spot where he runs up the ropes and does a 180 twist into an armdrag, while hooking the leg, and then spinning it into a crucifix. I watched it 6 times, including twice in slow motion, and there was other stuff in there which was also nearly as jaw dropping. This was building to finish alot higher on this list, but I thought the ending was a bit abrupt. The rudos have some big dramatic escapes, including Hero hanging in the AT lock for a long time. However Skyde kind of goes down to the first big move he is hit with. I really am not a guy who clamors for more near falls in a match, but this match shouldn't of ended where it did.

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CAGE RAGE 14, LONDON, ENGLAND, UK, 3 December, 2005 (that's how they do it over there)

[BLOCKHEAD DAN]

This Richard fellow fails to sell me on the card, telling me that if I miss it, it's on me. I've already decided to watch and he makes me want to change my mind. Thankfully Ian Freeman shows up to take over the Talking Head role and my interest returns. They've got Pride veterans! They've got UFC veterans! They've got Cage Rage Champions! Yeah, better hype.

Alan "Ruddy" Murdoch (97 kg) v. Dave "The Enforcer" Legeno (102 kg): Freeman says Murdoch is a little fitter, but at first I think he says bitter since that sounds more natural coming from his

mouth. Legeno has some serious pre-championship Arlovski hair going on. The commentator remarks that Legeno is "a songwriter, he's an actor, he's a tough man" those three go together.

Legeno lands a barrage of barrages to start, with Murdoch doing little but walk into them. A guillotine attempt by Legeno goes nowhere so he goes back to throwing a lot of leather. He's hitting Ruddy, but Ruddy doesn't seem to care. Suddenly a Ruddy knee changes the complexion and Legeno seems to have punched himself out. As soon as I type that, though, Ruddy gets hit and for the first time is staggered. Legeno attempts to capitalize but his punches don't have the speed they had earlier and Ruddy shrugs them off. Another knee from Ruddy and Legeno can't hold up his arms. More flailing, Legeno circles backwards to keep distance, and the commentators speculate that Legeno needs to throw a knee. He does, but he misses, but Ruddy's legs go wobbly anyway so the commentators were right. Legeno lay on top of Ruddy and does... nothing really. He attempts a guillotine, but gives up on that. They get to their feet and this time Legeno sinks the guillotine, sort of, and falls onto his back. This allows Murdoch to get his head out and get mound. He attempts an arm-bar, and manages to get an arm-bar without the bar. Still the ref calls it off. I can't say I'm upset. This fight had me yearning for the skill and acumen of Cabbage v. Nakao.

Daijiro "The Japanese Guy" Matsui (83kg) v. Alex "Reidernater" Reid (84kg): MATSUI! I was wondering what happened to him. Never a dull fight with Matsui. I hope he throws a dropkick or two. The strengths listed for these two are durability and determination respectively. Thankfully, I know that Matsui is skilled, so we shouldn't see another amateurish performance.

Matsui flies in under a Reid kick for a takedown, but doesn't follow into position. Reid throws a bunch of kicks that resemble a tot having a tantrum that the commentators call impressive upkicks. From there it's Matsui working away at a takedown and getting it. They've clipped the round, but what they showed was mostly Matsui striking from inside Reid's guard, with the occasional Reid counterstrike.

Round 2, what they show, is more of the same: Matsui working away from Reid's guard, Reid doing a good job of not taking damage, but little in the way of escaping. Reid apparently wore down his own defense, because Matsui eventually passes the guard and when he does, he pretty much walks through it. The round ends with Matsui working for a submission after landing the best blows so far this fight.

Matsui does not start round three with a drop kick. BOOO! Matsui gets a takedown and the ref calls for a stand-up. Either that was hometown officiating or a cut. I'm not sure. Reid gets some nice strikes in on standup but Matsui backs away and hits an Imanari take-down, flopping on his back and getting top position. The round ends with Matsui landing shots in half-mount.

What clips I saw were a shock. A Matsui match that wasn't highly entertaining. The match is called a majority draw, which is utterly ridiculous based on what I saw. Matsui controlled the

positions, hit most of the damaging shots. One barrage doesn't make up for 14 minutes of laying on your back trying not to lose. Hometown scoring or bad clipping. Either way, I'm not happy.

Akira "The Other Japanese Guy" Shoji (83kg) v. Mark "The Wizard" Weir (83kg): By Pride veterans, they mean Pride fodder from days gone by. Weir's most famous for getting a flash KO over Eugene Jackson in the UFC followed by having the fight of the night as a prelim and making air, only to lose and not return to the UFC. Nor did the victor for that matter. Never could figure that out.

They circle and Weir hits a roundhouse kick that floors Shoji and pounces on him for the win. Not bad at all.

Michihiro "Yet Another Japanese Guy" Omigawa (70 kg) v. Gesias "JZ" Calvacante (70 kg): Calling Matsui "the Japanese Guy" was a joke on Ian Freeman's prefight commentary. Calling Shoji "the Other Japanese Guy" was a joke on how everyone who isn't Japanese has a nicknamed. With Omigawa, it's just a joke, and a tired one at that.

They put on a nice little display of boxing footwork, morseo Calvacante than Omigawa. Calvacante throws an overhand hook that misses once, but connects on the second try. There was no need for a third.

Anthony "Wild Thing" Rea (93 kg) v. Vitor "The Phenom" Belfort (93 kg): Rea is a talented lightweight, but this is a step up in competition. Belfort, while sluggish against the top level of competition, is a world class fighter against anyone else. Rea is a LeBanner guy, so the potential for fistmanship is there.

Fistmanship is the very start, but Belfort dodges around Rea and hits a nice counterpunch. Rea attempts a takedown, or just staggers to his knees into Belfort as if shooting. Belfort goes for a guillotine and drops to guard, but quickly releases it... the guillotine that is. Belfort holds a tight guard, and Rea lays there, praying for a standup, until Belfort attempts an arm-bar and transitions into an Omo Plata! As usual, it isn't secured, and they scramble for position until Belfort locks on a tight guillotine. Not tight enough, however, as Rea pops out. They end up back on their feet and Rea is looking like, well, Belfort does when facing a world class fighter: out of steam and heart. Belfort hits a flurry at will and then leans in for a clinch. Not sure why Belfort did that. The editors hit me with a clip that shows Belfort against the cage instead of Rea. They just kind of circle to end the round.

They begin round two as they started round one: circling. Rea comes in and Belfort hits a counter-flurry and has Rea reeling backwards. He stops and backs away. Belfort seems to have totally lost that killer instinct, or maybe it's just that one of those flurries used to be enough to knock someone out. The fight continues with more Rea charging and Belfort counterpunching, getting off ridiculous punches as counters. This ends with a counter-uppercut to send Rea to the floor and the ref to the bell. Not a bad fight, until you consider that it's Belfort and remember

what he used to be and what everyone thought he would be and then it's kind of sad on the sliding scale of expectations.

Curtis "Band Em Out" Stout (83.9 kg) v. Anderson "The Spider" Silva (84 kg): Stout's got some KO power. So does Silva. Silva's probably a bit more well rounded. Well, maybe more than a bit. He's also much more than a bit more experienced. I think this could be a good learning experience for Band Em Out.

They start to circle and Silva sends in a combo, all hits. He then gets a nice waistlock takedown for mount, but doesn't get base quickly enough and Stout does the 101-bump-escape to end up in Silva's guard. Silva, unphased, goes for a triangle. Stout stands up and Silva drops, recovers and tackles Stout. All of this takes place in, like, ten seconds. Silva ends up in Stout's guard, but just stands up and punches him in the face. Repeatedly. Stout drops guard and Silva holds back his visible reflex to soccer kick Stout, opting to punch him instead and get the win. An excellent, quick, display of Anderson Silva's offensive capabilities.

Overall: This is the second time I've tried my hands at reviewing Cage Rage, and both times I feel I'm a little flat. Maybe it's the production of Cage Rage. Maybe it just doesn't excite me. I definitely enjoyed it, but I'm not walking away blown away by anything. Some of the British guys are questionably talented, which is perhaps to be expected. I also am a little disappointed that the Matt Lindland fight didn't make air. Oh well, not every card can have Matt Lindland.

~@~

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!!

Honey I saw you yesterday

On my way home

SINGLES GOING STEADY

Baby I craved for you today

So I decided to phone

!!

\$

Davey Richards, Scott Lost, Joey Ryan and Ricky Reyes vs. Super Dragon, El Generico, Jack Evans and Frankie Kazarian- [ROB NAYLOR]: This is from PWG Battle Of Los Angeles tourney from Sept 2005. This was just an awesome multiman tag. Everyone was on point in this and stepped up huge. The audience was totally fun in this also. Definitely was a case of a group of people willing to be entertained and pop for cool moves and funny antics, rather than bitch about something looking "Sloppy" or "well, lets minus half a star for that excessive kickout" etc. Guys that normally are pretty bland, like Reyes...showed more personality here, I dug when Reyes took a kick at Evans prior to the bell after he did his flip after being announced while wearing Generico's flashy cape. Generico is one of the most underrated wrestlers I've seen in the last two years. While I think he takes waaaay too much excessive punishment in certain

matches...I've seen very few people excel in interacting with the fans and just having natural charisma, like Generico does. He has a great ability of making whomever he faces look a ton better by taking their moves in sick ways that the crowd reacts to. I've seen Generico have fantastic matches with Kevin Steen, Jack Evans and EVEN Justice Pain a few weeks back. Generico always gets the people into his matches..whether through the major bumps he takes or just through crowd interaction. This match did a great job of making people want to see Super Dragon vs. Davey Richards.....as in the early going in this match, Richards would destroy or brush off guys like Evans and Generico...and then the fans would just chant for Super D to come in and trade elbows and forearms with the intense Richards. And OH MY, did those two ever trade strikes in this match. They also did some decent wrestling and counterwrestling on the mat, which was nice to see.

Richards is soooo the next major breakout star on the indies that it isn't even funny. He's incredible. He actually to me, is a hybrid of, Tajiri/Masato Tanaka/Low Ki/Austin Aries/Takada/Kawada and Doug Furnas.....He just exhibits qualities that all of the aforementioned do, without coming off like an indy guy simply mimicking other wrestlers. He'll change up stuff and string different kinds of offense into cool looking combo's in order to stand out. The knock against him is his height, as the guy is like 5'5 or 5'6.....but he is just so jacked and his offense and strikers are so explosive and credible, that it is like watching Buzz Sawyer or Bill Dundee, in that you see this lil dude and then watch them deliver a punch or powerslam on a larger wrestler and completely forget that they happen to be vertically challenged. Evans had one hell of a hot tag in this match and showed a lot of fire prior to being cut off. If Evans could just harness more aggression in his strikes on a more consistent basis, he'd be absolutely awesome. Sometimes his strikes look fine (here, 1/27 ROH, the DG X mas triple threat tag match, vs. Generico at PWG Night II Electric Bugaloo), but then other times really look weak. I figure the more he works with heavy hitters like Strong, Cide, Harry Smith and Richards (the latter two of which work with Evans on Pac Northwest indies) as well as the DG tours, perhaps well finally get more consistency in Evans' strikes. Back to the match...Lost does an incredible DOUBLE Scorpion Deathlock on Evans and Generico at one point...while all kinds of decent big moves are thrown out toward the end of the match. I've always enjoyed any big tag match that had all kinds of sick spots building to a climactic finish...and this tag certainly did that. I get the idea that this match had a lot of Super Dragon's ideas thrown into it, as every recent Super Dragon tag match I've seen (mostly with Richards) and tons of his past tags (the PWG tags with BBoy and other tags like his bouts with BBoy vs. Quance and Frantz from 02/03) all just have the coolest finishes. This one was no different as it builds to a Psycho Driver finish...but only after Evans jumps from the top rope onto the Psycho Driveeee then bounds out of the ring into an Orihara moonsault to Reyes, who was trying from the outside of the ring to break up the Psycho Driver. Just a killer finish to a fast paced match. This is the kind of match that, imo, every wrestling card needs. Highspots are NOT a bad word, imo...and I definitely think one match per card with a very fast pace will always break the monotony of a show. This match was great as it mainly showcased Richards, SD, Evans and Generico, but Lost, Reyes, Kazarian and Ryan, all totally were great in their roles as well. I mark for the SUPERMAN Spear and Joey Ryan always matches up well with Super Dragon and he also had some great stuff in this match when matching up with Generico.

Great match, Highly advise you pick it up.

TED DIBIASE vs TITO SANTANA- [rEGGIE mANTLE]: A Mid-South match, from Houston, called by Bill Watts, who reminds us repeatedly throughout that Tito has gone on to the greener pastures of "Vince McMahon's World Wrestling Federation" where he has attained "fame and fortune via the satellite empire" and the "International" championship. This is worth going out of your way to see not so much for the stellar main-event-in-any-arena-in-the-world ringwork, the great selling and bumping by both guys, as it is for the burial commentary by Watts. Watts tells us, again and again, about the flaws of the WWF style. How the wrestlers up there left Mid-South because they were cut-n-run types. How JYD went up there and "gained a bunch of weight", making everyone worried about him. Watts here channels the spirit of every bait-shop owner and hardware monger being pushed out of business in the 80s by the way the south was growing -- corporate expansion, the Yankee incursion, the coarsening of public ideals, the flouting of blue laws, the death of the good old boy, and so on and so on. Just brilliant, poetic commentary -- Watts cognizant that his territory, and the south itself, and the business itself, was doomed.

Matt Sydal vs. Kevin Steen- TPI 2005 Finals-[ROB NAYLOR]: This, imo, is a match that, since it happened back in September, is being very underrated. This tourney seemed to be Ian Rotten's way to give a nod of appreciation to Sydal, Delirious and Arik Cannon, for all their hard work for his group since 03ish. I think all three are quite good and I'd go a step further and say Sydal and Delirious have gotten great over the span of the last 12 months. And Arik throws a great right hand, btw. Sydal, I've seen referred on the DVDMB as "Akin to a JAPW spot guy", which I totally disagree with. I've seen the best of Deranged and Izzy (who I assume the comparison was made with, as Azreal and Archadia are nowhere even in the same hemisphere of decent wrestlers as Sydal, imo) and enjoy their wrestling styles, but I think that Sydal has eclipsed them and had many matches that stand out and a better overall grasp of slowing down his wrestling and adapting to numerous different styles. Sydal is a guy who throws great punches, kicks and bases a ton of his matches around being an underdog, but one that can use some general grappling and fundamentals to rise above his opponents. He's always really reminded me of Brady Boone, in his conditioning and ability to bust out pinning combinations and just great extension on his moves and bumps that always stood out as brutal and really did put over the opponents strengths in the ring. Kevin Steen isn't necessarily a darling of the internet. Sure, the IWS fans love him and Super Dragon and PWG and their fanbase found a way to totally exploit Steen's high impact style and draw some crowds and interest doing such... but most of the "smart folk" always seem to knock Steen. I enjoy Steen's wrestling. He comes up with unique and fun ways to kill his opposition. I can see how some find his style dangerous and toooo reliant on headdrops...and I'd kinda agree, but Steen's matches with the right opposition have impressed me on a regular basis. AND, he's spent enough time around Pierre Carl Oulette and Jacques Rougeau, that you aren't going to get me to diss him too much, since I'm a big fan of the Quebecers. Steen combines some of Rougeau's sick stuff (package stuff piledriver and a tendency for highflying) and Pierre's stuff (flip legdrops, everything high impact and a sick amount of moves that just look like the REAAAAALLY fuckin hurt for real).

THIS match that closed the TPI was my favorite Steen match ever. I don't totally credit Sydal for it, but he certainly brought his "A" game and I thought this match's story of Sydal fighting through the pain of all of the punishment Steen dealt out to pull off the big win, was great stuff. Steen's power offense and Sydal has a great ability to sell and just make Steen's moves and power attack look lethal and leave him if not knocked down, doing funny things standing up. Steen had Sydal weebing and wobbling and it legitimately seemed like Steen was winning this whole tourney. Steen's 450 really is an awesome and impactful move. Lots of wrestlers these days do 450's....but Steen really makes a ton of noise landing his 450 and people turn away in agony. Sydal fighting Steen on the buckles and finally hitting a beautiful SSP and then hooking Steen's legs and pulling upward for as deep a cover as you'll see was a very strong finish to the tourney.

KENTA V Kenta KOBASHI: Ah, well, this one here is APPARENTLY [acc. to Utoobe, though the Utoobe tagge could be wrong...] from March 2006, and it's really pretty dandy. Starts off with the requisite stiffness, and Kobashi's inner Tenryu comes out to play. The aging Kobashi does more for me than the sort of genki version from a decade or so ago. Kobashi brings the stiffness but KENTA answers in kind, kicking Kobashi in the face in that way we all like to see on the YouTube. The KENTA offense is sort of a highlight here, especially the sick hurracarana of Kobashi off the ring apron. Very strong psychology throughout the early portion -- KENTA controls with a combination of kicks and control wrestling, and both guys work the relatively basic holds for all they are worth. By midmatch, it's clear that this is one of the better matches of the year so far, as realistic as you'd want your pro-wrestling. KENTA absolutely tears Kobashi apart, grinding him into the mat, negating the old man's two stone weight advantage, pulverizing his right arm, showing an attention to basic psychology that seems lost on even the most hyped American workers nowadays. Kobashi, for his part, gets some headdropping suplex action in, as well as getting to work some neat counters to KENTA's onslaught. My favorite: Kobashi Babachopping KENTA across the bridge of the nose. My second favorite: Kobashi gleefully laying in a few dozen chops onto KENTA in the corner, smiling like he's on his first roll as he turns Kenta's chest into so much raw salmon. My third favorite: the release powerbomb into the top turnbuckle, just casual, merciless, and cold. I've had concussions, know what they feel like, but rarely imagine getting them; I imagined just that thing watching this match, though. Also, the right guy went over, clean as a sheet, and that puts the cherry on top of the purosundae. Like Mama McNabb's steaming broth, mmm mmm good.... [Skeeter Brawley]

Evans/Sydal/Jimmy Yang vs. B.J. Whitmer/ Jimmy Jacobs/Adam Pearce- [ROB NAYLOR]: This took place on January 27th and might be my favorite ROH opening match of all time. Basically took 6 wrestlers and exploited all of their strengths, all of them stepped up and took upon a fast pace and immediately just captivated the live crowd. Pearce, Whitmer and Jacobs did a great job in this match breaking down the highflyers and catching the nutty moves. Pearce taking a rana over the ropes and Whitmer catching a Sasuke Special Number 2 into a rana from Evans might be the best spot I've seen all year. Just incredible and the place came unglued for it.

Yang looked as good in this match as he ever has in ROH. Some of his singles matches of late, I haven't been all that impressed with, but he shines in tag atmospheres, imo. Evans busting out combos like kick/rolling leg lariats and a beautifully done rolling Northern Lights into a Fisherman buster for nearfalls showed vast improvement as far as execution goes. Jacobs going insane when his darling LACEY was nearly hurt by Evans was clutch. Jacobs love for Lacey knows no bounds. Evans has gone from an good worker in that he knows not to do too much and plays up comedy aspects and bad guy schtick and interaction with the audience to offset his weaknesses to being a bigtime babyface, where he now can bust out his more spectacular moves and just get cut off and destroyed and sell like he's dead. Pearce and Whitmer held their own in this...supplying the bigman offense and just going super high impact on Sydal in particular, who bumped like a freak and made great comebacks the whole way during this. Finish was spectacular as well and the perfect way to close out a match like this.

TOSHIAKI KAWADA vs MICK FOLEY- [Scott Mailman]: So Foley waddled out of retirement in 2004 to challenge for Kawada's Triple Crown. He shows up to the contract signing, gets buck wild with the barbed-wire baseball bat, then, before the match, pledges to not use the bat but wrestle Kawada "traditional-style". But, as Chekhov said, ya gotta use the weapon if you tease it, and so the bat resurfaces in this style clash. The match has a lot of stuff that worked, and a lot that didn't. What worked includes things like Foley eating some Kawada kicks and some of the later mat work where Foley acquits himself credibly, if unspectacularly, trying to take it to the mat shoot style. Is it enough to carry the match? Sort of. The work was fine enough, but even when he attempts to bring his A-game, it's hard to get around the idea that Foley working the "hardcore" gimmick at this late date is disingenuous. The things that folks loved about Cactus Jack -- the existential insights into the nature of wrestling and fame, the sick bumps, the juicing -- seem a little less salient to a fat, happy, satisfied Mick Foley, with half a foot in the wrestling game and his concentration and interest elsewhere. Technically a decent match. Those expecting more were probably disappointed. But they didn't have the right to be.

Ole and Arn Anderson vs. Gene Ligon and Rocky King- [ROB NAYLOR]: This was a March 1985 squash match from the second Superstation taping for World Championship wrestling. This match fell RIGHT after Ole turned on Thunderbolt Patterson and started teaming with Arn. Seriously, I had no idea how awesome this was...as I got a DVD with Manny Fernandez stuff on it....and this was a great surprise. Seriously, these guys took two jobbers and isolated their arms and totally just worked the most brilliant squash I'd ever seen. I'd seen several Ole and Arn squashes and remembered them from when I was a kid, but THIS particular squash should be shown to every aspiring wrestler. AMAZING. Slam on the arm, working a grounded hammerlock, quick tags near the corner, hammerlock and push of the shoulder into the buckle, shoulderbreaker, divorce court....just a superb match. Rocky King gets a huge amount of respect in this, just making Ole and Arn look like killers.

Ole was such a prick and they were just relentless in taking that one part of the body and rendering it useless. Tony and David did an awesome job on commentary breaking down why this team was so effective and what Gene and Rocky had to do to even compete here... "They need a good defense, not just a good offense in order to keep them away from the arm". If

anyone has old 1985 WTBS tapes from March, get em out and watch this squash. I was more entertained by this than most of the stuff I get tapes of anymore. Arn and Ole were always my least favorite Arn and "Partner" team, but this was probably one of my all time favorite Arn squashes, tag wise.

DAISUKE IKEDA V KATSUMI USUDA: BIG MOUTH LOUD presents a Date With Ikeda here. A 5 minute, spotty affair between two guys with shoot-style pretensions. A lot of stiffness here, great selling initially by Ikeda, though little attempt is made to establish a meaningful psychology. This causes problems later on, as the no-selling takes over; its apogee, Usuda no-selling a Death Valley Driver [probly the issue where they review the Junkyard Dog/Akira Maeda match from Mid-South TV in 1983]. Speaking of Mid-South, the match closes with a textbook brainbuster from Ikeda, and on the strength of using the brainbuster as a finisher in 2006, gets the coveted full Worldwide point. [Herb Heuer]

VHS CLASSIC- [ROB NAYLOR]: Anyone remember the "Danger Zone". Not the Paul E. Dangerously interview segment, but the Turner Home Video release. It is such a great video. Especially if you have a short attention span. Basically TONSSSSSS of clips (around 50 minutes worth) of all the big NWA TV taping match footage mixed with awesome interviews from the stars like Dusty, Ron Garvin, Jim Garvin, Flair, Tully and some sluts and more. And best of all you get HOSTs of Magnum TA and Missy Hyatt sitting on a couch. Missy looks great and maaaaan, she plays the part of ditzy to great new levels.

"Gee Magnum, these guys must be REAAAAAALLLY stupid to climb up those ropes - It will hurt when they come down....Teeeee heeeeee!"

"I just think that these guys are all so strong and really good"

"I can't imagine why any of these people would just get into pro wrestling and TAKE A CONSTANT POUNDING (never stopped Missy!)"

Seriously, this shit is amazing. Great to look back on this entire tape years later. Dusty's promos and Ron Garvin's promos totally steal this, imo. Aside from great Konga, Ivan Koloff, Spike and Basher, Chris Champion and Sean Royal, Lazor Tron, Nikita, Jimmy Garvin, Bobby Eaton and Manny Fernandez footage.....you also get the closing moments of Ron Garvin's NWA belt win over Ric Flair.

What a tape. If you still have a VHS or if you have this shit on BETA (discontinued in 88 or so), you owe it to yourself to watch this...If only to see a distinguished Magnum Terry Allen sitting on a couch with Missy Hyatt, who has the afterglow of a young lass who'd just taken it tag team style raw dawg in the ass from Jimmy and David Crockett to get the cameo on this awesome release. Tremendous entertainment value and you can watch this and remember when wrestling was the best show on WTBS and Worldwide wrestling was must see tv after Good Times on WPHL. I realize I promised CC/Hero, Roderick and Shibata reviews, but with the Top

100 of the 80's stuff this month, I had to bump the above stuff for next time. Just know that I reallllly loved Shibata vs. Kawada (even more than any Shibata BML, which I'll explain).

BOB BACKLUND V DON MURACO- [Dilton Doiley]: 3.20.83 is the date on this WWE 24/7 offering -- which puts us well past Backlund's sell-by date for this champion vs champion Texas Death Match. Starts off with a promo from Muraco: "I've been with him for hours" [coke sniff] :and he's been with me for hours"... Muraco seems like the kind of guy who films amateur porn in office park suites in Altamonte Springs. But enough of that.... Backlund, before the match starts, appears to flip Muraco off, suggesting that the tension is so present that he can't restrain himself from going Stone Cold....First significant action of match business exposing -- a wrenching showbizzy standing side headlock from Backlund, showing more light than an open sunroof at high noon in a drought plain. Muraco just stands there in the headlock, not even bothering to resist; just more stupid shit for Yankees and drooling fools....Monsoon: "That side headlock -- it'll take it outta ya".....Eventually, we go to the mat -- more headlock; Jumbo/Robinson '77, this ain't....I'm sure this picked up, really, but after a seven minute side headlock, I just didn't care enough to find out why or how it picked up. Just dull, pedestrian, insipid, heatless crap. And ya know, I don't think it was Muraco's fault....

EL CANEK vs MIL MASCARAS- [JEN THE BOX]: From a SoCal indy outfit -- IWS? -- or something like that, in the last few years. The action here is total exhibition style -- 3/4 speed, loose stuff; bumps taken from blows whose only impact came through mere suggestion. Yet the announcing carries the match. The PBP guy channels the spirit of David Crockett -- those nausea inducing 'I'm really workin' the marks now!' jolly tones -- in telling the videotape audience what a classic we're witnessing. Main Event In Any Arena in the world. I guess he had to say that, to justify the promotion's investment, but after a while the stench of shit got so thick that I had to close the YouTube window. I didn't just stop the tape. I exited the application. Legends matches often sound like a good idea, but in the case of this one, it was just two fat old Mexicans in lycra doing the bare minimum to pick up a paycheck, to cash in ones and stuff it up the crotchholes of syphilitic strippers, or to score some valium or hydrocodone or the economy sized Xanax or whatever the poison d'jour might be. I understand why the luchadors mailed it in -- I mean, never give a sucker an even break, soak the rubes, and all that. I would've mailed it in too. After all, there comes a point in a man's career, after the accolades have dried up into a blotch of memory, a puke stain on life's worn out shag carpet, where you realize that the point of living is to do just as little as possible. Because around the corner, there's always more unnecessary drama -- someone's bullshit, or some leech wanting money, or someone wanting to make a profit from your rotting form. Good job, Canek and Mil. You worked the ultimate marks, those indy money men. You gave them nothing and made them sell it like history was being made.

ULTIMATE WARRIOR vs HARLEY RACE- [TOM KARRO-GARSNER]:So when this WWE 80s thing started out there was a thread where people were allowed to nominate matches. There is not a lot of WWF that I liked in the eighties or any other time. I mean it is a fed that I rarely paid attention to. But I nominated Ron Garvin vs. Greg Valentine from MSG. Years ago I started trying to get a hold of every tape with the Rockers vs. Brainbusters on it. The two teams really

match up poorly but I'm a big fan of Tully and Arn and so assumed that eventually if I kept on getting matches between the two I'd eventually find the good one. Never happened but in the process got a tape that also had the Garvin vs. Valentine MSG match on it. And really dug it. As kind of remembered it being like Flair v. Garvin just without all the bumps. Memory underrated the match as it's really an epic match. Dean doesn't fully do it justice as he mostly talks about the stiffness when a lot of the pleasure of the match is the Garvin selling and bumps and the near fall build. Anyways that's beside the point- the point is that that was the one match that I wanted more people to see and so pimped it in the nomination post. There are other WWF matches in the 80s that I was familiar with that I also liked (Race vs. Haku for instance) but that I didn't think were good enough to merit me pushing for their inclusion. One of the matches I always kind of dug was Race v. Warrior. It's about a nine minute match and at the time of the nomination process I thought it was an incredible job that Race did carrying Warrior.

"He [Harley Race] was talking about his run in the WWF, the reason he was brought in, and more importantly who he was working at the time. The conversation went exactly like this:

Harley: "...and he had me working Hogan, JYD, and one of my last programs was with....shit. What's his name? The guy. You know. Big guy....c'mon, you know! That faggot Indian."

Match takes place Pre-Mania IV and begins with collar and elbow lock up. Race hits a bunch of nice strikes that Warrior shrugs off and no sells. Harley hits a lariat that Warrior no sells. Warrior hits one of the shittiest sub Ice Train lariats ever which Harley takes a bump for and then does Terry Funk punch-drunk stumbling. Warrior shakes ropes. They collar and elbow tie up again Race hits a beautiful headbutt, Warrior no sells and Irish whips Race into other corner where Race does a spectacular 360 bump to floor (the one that Helmsley tries to do in every match). Race walks around ring selling the strong Irish whip and then walks up ring steps to get back into ring. Despite all the bump ability, Race is an old man and he holds onto the arm rail (that they used to have on the ring steps) to help him climb the stairs into the ring. There is this weird disconnect between the match and watching an old broken man walk up stairs. Race then does the Race falling backwards bump as he lures Warrior to ring steps, Warrior blocks a Race punch and then clubs Race sending Race to his butt and then Race does the slow collapse slithering head first down stairs.

And that's kind of the way match works. Race back in and another lock up another set of Race strikes, another Race bump this time off double noggling knocker leading to Race falling back into ropes and then face plants headbutting Warrior in the nuts on the way down. Warrior's nipples suddenly harden. Creepy as there maybe some subtext to the "faggot" part of Race's curse. Queering doesn't make the world work. But the low blow leads to Race getting in some offense.

They run through the same thing again Race does his tied in the ropes bump and eventually gets lariated out of tied in ropes bump to do a 360 to floor bump. Race does another this time intentional headbutt to nads to take over on offense again.

So you get Race with ineffective strikes, fun signature bumps, and low blows as only moves sold by opponent. And Race in WWF in 89 is essentially Flair in 2004. I dug some 2004 Flair and I'm entertained by this.

Race isn't Flair so he does a seated piledriver and a suplex. It's possible that Flair is smarter by not doing all his throws anymore as I don't get the point of doing meaningless throws when opponent only sells low blows. Really makes those moves masturbatory. Race's moves are too good looking to be used as functional equivalent of chinlock. He shouldn't be throwing them out there, if that's how the match is gonna treat them.

Ultimate Warrior eventually REVERSES a suplex into a roll up and wins the thing. Fun match with Race controlling pretty much the entire thing by setting up signature bumps.

Like I said earlier, I was never that familiar with the 80s WWF. Seeing what a guy like Rude could do with the Warrior really makes Race come across like Flair in 2004. He can carry opponent and I pop for all the signature bumps but maybe someone else could do it better at this point.

DUSTY RHODES/MIKE DAVIS vs RON BASS/ONE MAN GANG- [LEE MARSHALL]: So I was reading the Observer, and lo and behold, Ron Bass apparently is either still an active wrestler or is coming out of retirement -- in any case, he's working a Tampa show. Opinions vary about Ron Bass -- I always liked the mustache much more than the wrestler. Bass/GANG aren't a superworker team or anything like that, but this here match from Florida TV doesn't require that. They are here to be foils to Rhodes. This match is of the impromptu variety, starting after Bass and Gang talked a bit too much trash ringside to Gordon Solie; Rhodes comes out in a ringer GILLEY's tee and a bubble vest and gets right up in Bass's grill, and it is pro-wrestling at its finest, the kind of glorious shtick that useta pack houses around the horn, despite the nefarious influence on the company of one Mike Graham. The match starts, Australian rules, and Rhodes is still flashing agility here, even though we're into the early 80s at this point, as he runs the ropes and the like. Good energy early on hampered by an odd, business exposing sequence, where Davis sleeperholds Bass, from the ring apron, and there is like no tension whatsoever on the move. Davis wouldn't have put a stuffed bear to sleep with that, never mind a real life bear like Bass. Most of the early part of the match is Bass & Rhodes, and what is striking is that Rhodes is forced here to work for four -- Davis is inept, Bass can't be bothered to sell the control holds, and so Rhodes is forced to work around the Cowboy, chainwrestling as if with a corpse. And Stardust answers the challenge, with about a dozen different hammerlock/armbar variations, rolling through, as if to cover up for Bass' inability to do his job. Davis tags in, and immediately the bout turns to garbage -- that 80s genki babyface offense that does very little to establish credibility in the way his partner's work does. After a couple of tags, we find OMG and Dusty in the ring together, and immediately Rhodes does as you're supposed to, and takes the big man down with a textbook double leg takedown, and then smoothly moves into a short-leg scissors. All of this good work is undercut, sadly, by Gang choosing not to sell Rhodes' offense. And this really sets the tone for the match -- Dusty, the consummate gimmick performer in some

respects, too comic for all the purists out there, too black for the suburban fans, too fat for the body type fetishists, is forced to be the superworker of this match, to make this clump of chickenshit into something that can draw. Eventually Davis gets knocked out of the match, and Dusty is left to job, via countout, to the numbers game and the cheating and everything else, but not before kicking out of two of Gang's splashes at 2 3/4, and I remember why Dusty was so irritating to watch as a kid -- for all the good he does in a match, for all he brought to the table, he couldn't lose a match without there being some sort of asterisk, some qualification that explained exactly why he lost. Dusty never lost because his opponent was the better man, and, well, that can be unsatisfying storytelling, especially over the long haul if you will. Meanwhile, say what you will about Bass and Gang's manager, JJ Dillon. He may be a snake in the grass... but at least he's no WEASEL. 1-800-collect, holla at cha boy, audi 5000.

Chuckie Smooth vs. CM Punk - 8/31/02- [RAVEN MACK]: I was glad to hear of Chuckie Smooth's return to the IWA-MS rings, so I figured I'd rewatch an old favorite match of mine, straight off a baseball diamond for Mid-American Wrestling - which even though nobody ever hypes it, has probably been one of the two or three consistently entertaining indy promotions for me over the last five or six years. A lot of pre-match bullshitting with Punk talking shit to the crowd, which somehow leads to some hot in a 420girls.com chubby-by-internet-porn-but-not-by-real-life's-standards girl to show her ample tits and bounce them in circles amidst the crowd, then after hugging her boyfriend, do it point blank for the cameraman as well. Match itself is decent enough, you can definitely see the marketability of a young Punk because he doesn't look like your average indy worker. His cockiness seems reality-based enough that it's not hard for him to play that character to the hilt for as long as someone pays him to, and I'm sure of all the WWE developmental talent they try to grind through their gimmick machine in OVW, he probably needs the least amount of processing, although they'll overseason him with their special blend of sports entertainment herbs and writers who don't watch wrestling spices nonetheless.

Very odd just thinking about this being four years ago and how all these people hit this one point together and what's happened since then. Punk's been the indy darling and the masturbatory dreamboat of ROHbots, who might've turned on him at some point before he went to WWE minor leagues, or maybe not, I'm not sure anymore who's supposed to be cool and who's not. I know internet nerds love to live vicariously through Punk as the guy they saw on some indy show three years ago will now get to fuck random WWE Diva-of-the-Month flavors fresh off of blips all through the Maxim-like magazine section of the Barnes & Nobles magazine stand, where men who are too fuckin' pussy to leave real porn mags laying around the house buy pictures of women to look at.

And the tittie flashing girl, I'm sure her life has been nothing but something else ever since. She reminds me a little of my youngest sister, who's not so much an exhibitionist as that, but has that same wild streak to her (stole a car with her best friend when they were 13). My sister briefly was addicted to crank, same time her boyfriend got addicted to crack and stole a few thousand dollars from the video store he was working at, and realizing it was all caving in, wrecked their car on purpose one night putting my sister into the windshield. That woke her up and she's been down to nothing but the chronic for at least a year now, and seems to be getting her self-esteem

back. I'm sure the tittie-flashing girl has had similar real life low class things, because ringside at a MAW show is not the same as being at Mardi Gras or Daytona during spring break - you don't yank up your Big Lots blouse to flop your braless tits in front of a couple hundred strangers and move on to the straight-and-narrow life of picket fences and spindled staircases very easily. But I'm sure this was a highlight in her life, one of those, "Remember when..." moments she can share with friends while they trade bonghits while barely watching Ali G's first season for the three hundredth time.

As for Chuckie Smooth, he's someone I've made slight acquaintance with over the internet machines, and I've always loved how much he didn't give a shit as a heel and would be right in somebody's fuckin' face. Seemed like a few years back, a lot of folks felt that way. But Chuckie had his problems outside the ring, and wrestling fans are not the understanding type, they are a judgemental lot waiting to turn on workers who no longer satisfy their smart hipsterism.

Chuckie's got himself cleaned up for a minute now, too, much like my sister but from worse shit than she had going on, but you never really clean yourself up from those low times. You get the scars and you see things you never forget. I've seen glimpses of it in my life because of where and how I grew up, and who I grew up around, but kept most of it from being too directly affective on my personal life. I've got an uncle right now who was an outlaw biker with the Pagans MC back in the late '70s - crazy motherfucker who could punch cinderblocks and make them break - and he dabbled heavily in heroin and alcohol during his adult life, and is clean now for the last two or three years, but had 95% kidney failure late last summer and was given like 10 days to live. He's shriveled up and almost embarrassing and pathetic to see now, but he's still alive, too fuckin' crazy to die it seems. I'm glad a guy like Chuckie could get it together at a younger age so maybe he doesn't have to lay there being all pathetic like that.

I'm also sure the interweb smart hipsters will be stereotypically appreciative of Chuckie's sobriety, much like they all patted a Chris Candido or Eddy Guerrero on the back - but that's selfishness mostly, because it means they get to see someone wrestle again. I can tell you from staying in touch with him that Chuckie knows this shit; he understands how fuckin' fickle wrestling fans are and how when he was at his lowest points, nobody would've pissed on him were he on fire. He's got a large chip on his shoulder, and fuck, you can take the heroin out of the vein, but you can't take the dirtbag out of the man. Which is great, because indy wrestling needs more shitheads like Chuckie Smooth and less guys who hang out at Hot Topic looking for shirts to wear for when they update their livejournal or myspace site. I'd trade one chubby chick flashing her tits ringside for a million "CLEV! ER! CHANT! THING!" clap clap clapclapclaps.

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8 FISTS IN THE FACE OF WRESTLING, MOTHERFUCKER.
THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ